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# Ecclesiastical Law and Discipline.

A CHARGE TO THE CLERGY

OF THE

PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH

OF VIRGINIA. ✓

32. BY THE ✓

RIGHT REV. WILLIAM MEADE, D. D.

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"Of Law, there can be no less acknowledged, than that her seat is the bosom of God, her voice the harmony of the world. All things in heaven and earth do her homage, the very least as feeling her care, and the greatest as not exempt from her power. Both angels, and men, and creatures of what condition soever, tho. each in different sort and manner, yet with uniform consent, admiring her as the mother of their peace and joy."

HOOVER.

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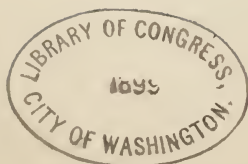
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# CHARGE TO THE CLERGY

OF THE PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF VIRGINIA, ON  
THE SUBJECT OF DISCIPLINE.

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DEAR BRETHREN:—

BY the 27th Canon of our General Convention it is declared to be proper, that every Bishop shall, at least once in three years, deliver a charge to the clergy of his Diocese, besides pastoral letters to the people of the same. Although but two years have elapsed since I endeavored to perform this duty, I yet deem it expedient to address you at this time; and if an excuse were needed for seeming to do a work of supererogation, it might be found in this, among other facts, that an interval of five years was permitted to intervene between the two last charges.

## SECTION I.—INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

The subject to which I invite your attention at this time, is the exercise of discipline, according to the rubrics and canons of the Church, in the congregations committed to your care. Whatever assistance you may have from those who are over you in the Lord, or from some of those over whom you are in the Lord, nevertheless on you, according to God's word, the practice of the Church in all ages, and from the nature of your office, this duty and responsibility mainly, nay, almost entirely rests. Wherefore, at the time of your elevation to the second grade of the ministry, when you are permitted to take full charge of a congregation, having purchased to yourselves a good degree, by performing the office of a deacon well, you are publicly, and in the most solemn manner, required by the Bishop, in the prescribed service, to promise that you "will give your faithful diligence, always so to

minister the doctrine, sacraments and *discipline of the Church*, as the Lord hath commanded, and this Church hath received the same, according to the commandments of God." On this promise, you are ordained to be "faithful dispensers of the word of God and his holy sacraments." Then it is that the keys of Christ's kingdom are put into your hands, to open or to shut the same. Then is power given you in his Church below, to remit or retain sins—not in the way claimed by the Church of Rome—but in that scriptural way set forth in all the offices and confessions of Protestant Christendom—that is, by the faithful preaching of God's word, the due administration of the sacraments and the right exercise of godly discipline. You are also in the same service, and at the same time most solemnly warned of the "greatness of your fault, and the horrible punishment that will ensue," if through your negligence the Church, or any member thereof, do take any hurt or hindrance."

The exercise of godly discipline, both as to the clergy and laity, has ever been regarded by all the Reformed Churches as one of the notes or marks of a true Church of Christ. The want of it, or the substitute for it, of a most corrupt and pernicious system in the Romish communion, is one of those defects which have made many deny her a place among the Churches of Christ, and others assign her the very least and lowest which can entitle to the name of a Church. Our homily for Whitsunday says of the "True Church," that is, the Church in her integrity, that it "hath always three notes or marks, whereby it is known, viz: pure and sound doctrine; the sacraments duly administered according to Christ's institution; and the right use of ecclesiastical discipline. This description of the Church is agreeable both to the scriptures of God and also to the doctrine of the ancient fathers, so that none may justly find fault therewith." All these notes or marks, the homily

denies to the Church of Rome, as it then was, and had been for nine hundred years. The Church of Rome is, therefore, regarded as a most maimed and imperfect one, even by those who admit her to the rank of a Church of Christ. She herself does not deny the necessity of this note of the Church, and long before the Reformation confessed herself most defective therein, ever proposing amendment, but never accomplishing it. No branch of the Christian Church, no sect or schism, however heretical, but admitted that it was the ordinance of God, and made some pretensions to it. Some separations have been made on this ground alone, that the body from which they separated, was too destitute of this important feature of a Church, though possessing all others.

## SECTION II.—THE SPECIAL USE OF DISCIPLINE.

It being admitted by all that God hath appointed this as one of the instruments by which we are to make full trial of our ministry in edifying the body of Christ, that is, building up the faithful for heaven, we must, of course, acknowledge the duty of its use, nor can we expect the appropriate blessing without it. The same God who has enjoined and promised to bless the faithful preaching of the word, and holy administration of the sacraments, has appointed this to be used with them, and his word must not be broken, and thus all parts maimed and weakened in their operation. Some good may doubtless be done by the parts thus separated, especially if they be separated through no fault of our own, but of unavoidable necessity. Faithful preaching of itself may effect much. Fervent, effectual prayer may avail much. The reverent administration of ordinances may commend them to many, and be the means of grace. But the special effects of all these may be greatly hindered for want of this other instrument, while the particular blessing assigned to this may be lost by its neglect.

Reproach may thus be cast upon the Church by treating the evil as the good. The evil communications of the unworthy may corrupt the good manners of the righteous. The very word, and sacraments, and worship, may come to be despised; and many will begin to ask, "Who will show us any good?" This principle is not confined to the Church of God. It is true of all communities, civil, social and religious. "We see the whole world and each part thereof," says Hooker, "so compacted, that so long as each thing performeth that work which is natural to it, it thereby preserveth both other things and itself also. Every thing is for some end, neither can anything be available to any end which is not proportionable thereto." "We may not in any one special kind admire her (divine wisdom), that we disgrace her in any other, but let all her ways be according to their place and degree adored." We see how this is exemplified in families, which are designed to be nurseries for the Church of God. Parents are invested with great authority over children, and directed by precept, example, and the exercise of wholesome discipline, to train them up for heaven. But how often is it attempted to effect this by the two former alone, the latter being dispensed with as too painful. Without doubt God does sometimes, for the children's sake, make up the deficiency, and bless to them good example and pious instruction. But as a general rule, when authority is not exerted in the exercise of wholesome discipline, then are pious admonitions and holy examples entirely lost upon them, and even despised. Therefore it is, that parents are directed to bring up their children in the *nurture*, that is discipline, as well as *admonition* of the Lord. Ministers especially are required to be examples in this respect, for they are not allowed to be ordained, without a public, solemn promise, to rule their households well; such as do not, being according to scripture declared to be unfit to rule the Church of God. How many weak parents, both

in and out of the ministry, have, by neglect of this, though perhaps making some trial of other means, utterly failed, and brought shame and sorrow on themselves, and disgrace on the Church of God. See this exemplified in some of the children of Eli and David, who, though in many respects men after God's own heart, yet failing here, brought sorrow on themselves, reproach on the Church and ruin on their sons. It was not thus with old Abraham, of whom God said, "I know my servant Abraham that he will *command* his children and his household after him." Such was not the counsel which God inspired the wisest of the sons of men to deliver on this subject. In many proverbs does he warn against the neglect of salutary discipline; and in one especially declares that he who neglects it, "*hates his child.*" Certain it is, that a parent's hatred is often less injurious to the child than his weak indulgence. It were easy to show, that it is thus in regard to all authority placed by God in the hands of man for the benefit of others. No such authority is ever relinquished, or neglected, without evil, sooner or later, to all concerned. Be it in the household, be it in the State, the army, the navy or any society whatever, if the rulers thereof be not a terror to evil doers, by the rod of correction, as well as a praise to them that do well, by the commendation bestowed, and the rewards distributed, then confusion, discord, vice, and much unhappiness must ensue. All experience, all history testifies to this. The worst days of Israel were, when every man did that "which was right in his own eyes."

### SECTION III.—DIFFICULTY OF DISCIPLINE.

As the administration of discipline is a most important part of the machinery of Christ's Church, not to be omitted without diminishing the effect, and disordering the working of all others, so it is to be confessed, that its right use is most difficult, requiring the full exercise not only of fidelity,



but of judgment, patience and kindness. It is doubtless on account of the difficulties, and painfulness of it, that some ministers shrink from its exercise, and leave it almost untried. Like all other things, however, which are potent for good if rightly used, it is also potent for ill, when abused. It has been, like all the appointments of God, perverted in the hands of man. In the evil days of the Church, civil and ecclesiastical power have been united in the same hands, and those, the hands of the clergy. Civil pains and penalties have been inflicted on the rebellious and heretical, while money and penance have not only cancelled and atoned for sins that were past, but have purchased the privilege of sinning in time to come. Against all this the Reformers protested, and by their preaching, living and dying, purged the Church of such abominations. We are in no such danger now, though some might desire to restore them in part. Our danger lies in a different direction. As to our Mother Church, the supremacy of the State has ever held her in bondage. In our own country the entire separation of Church and State, and the poverty and dependence of the clergy, forbid all fear of ecclesiastical tyranny. A time serving and cowardly fear of offending, is the snare now laid for God's ministers. Nevertheless, there may be cases of error, and even of oppression, at this day and in this land, and it is proper that the Church should be well guarded against them. This can be done, and has been done, by a legislation as special, and as full, as times and circumstances require, and not only by uniting a portion of the laity in making the laws, but occasionally, to a certain extent, in the execution of them. Besides this, so careful is the Church to have her discipline wisely administered, that she intrusts it not to Deacons, who are on probation, but only to those who have proved themselves worthy of such a trust, and of being admitted to a higher order. Nor does she wholly intrust it even to these, since they are required to

report their acts of discipline to the Bishop, who is usually one not only higher in office, but of more age and experience. To him an appeal may be made by any who feels aggrieved. Yea more, the church does not even intrust this power to his hands, without reminding him at his consecration, that while diligently exercising discipline, by the authority of God and the order of the Church, he must mingle mercy with justice, saying, "Be so merciful, that thou be not too remiss; so minister discipline, that thou forget not mercy." Discipline should ever be exercised, as wise yet tender parents deal with those children whom they chasten in love, and for their good—not in selfish anger—provoking them to wrath; but to save them from ruin in both worlds. It should be done as skilful, conscientious physicians administer the sickening medicine, or use the amputating knife. They do it reluctantly and painfully. Fain would they forbear, but the patient might die, and his death be laid to their charge. It is thus our kind Heavenly Father and great Physician deals with us. He chastens us with the rod of love, proportioning his corrections to our faults and our need. He bears long with us, before the time comes when he must cut off. Nor does he cast us quite away even then, being ever ready to receive his returning prodigals. Thus dealt he with the Jews—the people whom he so loved. Long did he bear with them, seeking sometimes by his goodness, sometimes by severity, to lead them to repentance, until at length he banished them for seventy years from their land and temple, and now for eighteen hundred years has scattered them over the earth; though he may yet, if they repent, restore them again. These things are intended as examples to God's ministers.

#### SEC. IV.—DISCIPLINE UNDER THE OLD DISPENSATION.

Having made these preliminary remarks, we enter on the more regular consideration of the subject before us.

1st. Let us seek for its origin and authority.

Its institution is divine. God himself established and enforced it in Paradise, where, though man was in a state of innocence, he was under probation, and liable to discipline. One act of self-denial was required even then. One prohibitory law issued from the throne of God, with a heavy penalty annexed to its violation. Death to body and soul was the threatened penalty. But our long-suffering God did not inflict it immediately. A part was suspended for a time, the remainder might be averted altogether by repentance and faith. Though anathema was inflicted, maranatha, the everlasting curse, was withheld. They were cast out from the earthly Eden, but a hope was held out of restoration to a heavenly one. Some have thought that the punishment, as inflicted, was too great for the deed. They should remember that in the deed, was the sin of rebellion and disobedience towards God, and that he best knew how to deal with the offender, so as to punish the crime, correct the transgressor, and establish his authority in this and other worlds. For the purpose of carrying on his wholesome government, he has, in addition to all those fatherly chastisements, by which in his providence he chastens the erring children of men, appointed in his Church certain ministers of discipline. Of this the patriarchs were for a long time his chief agents. They were invested with absolute authority, being fathers, priests and princes in their families, commanding their households after them, blessing or cursing, in the name of the Lord. In due time he thought proper to select one family, and multiply it into a great nation, making it a peculiar people, to shew forth his praises and to be a channel of blessings to the whole world. To that people he gave the great moral law, the sum and substance of all moral laws and precepts. He wrote it distinctly with his own hand on tables of stone. With more or less distinctness he writes it on the fleshly tables of the hearts of all



men. To this rule must all the principles and actions of men be brought, for by this law is the knowledge of sin, which is the transgression of it. All the rules, prohibitions and ordinances of the Jews were designed to enforce this law, and make it a school-master to bring us to Christ. Many things appointed and prohibited to the Jews, seem to us trivial, and unworthy of the greatness of God, especially when considered in connection with the penalties of disobedience. These penalties were fines, and offerings required for atonement; sometimes bodily pains. Sometimes the offenders were separated from God's people, and deprived of his ordinances. They were then said to be cut off, or separated. This was for a longer or shorter period, according to the offence. Sometimes they were simply said to be cut off, at others utterly cut off. Where the period of separation, and the privileges withdrawn were not precisely specified, the Jewish courts decided. One object of the separation, no doubt, was to make them feel more sensibly the value of fellowship with God's people, and communion with him by the help of his ordinances. Whoever would understand this subject aright, should study it in the books of Moses, especially in Exodus, Leviticus and Deuteronomy, where he will see the nature of the obedience required, of the things prohibited, and of the penalties affixed. One thing will be evident from such examination, that very many of those prohibitions which appear most trivial, are of things which were practised by the nations around, from which God adopted this method of separating his people, lest their evil manners should corrupt those good ones enjoined on his peculiar people. "Come out from among them, and be ye separate," was the cry under the law, as it has been under the gospel. Often indeed were these laws a dead letter, being uninforced, discipline relaxed, and no difference put between the evil and the good, the clean and the unclean. Then did God most heavily complain by his

prophets of those who came unworthily to his solemn feasts, saying, "What hast thou to do with me, that thou shouldst take my covenant within thy mouth." "It is iniquity, even the solemn meeting." His soul was weary of his own appointed feasts and holy days, by reason of their profanation. All those customs, practices and ceremonies of the nations around, were doubtless, more or less opposed to the spirit of the moral law, and therefore also forbidden. But beside these prohibitions, God, either by positive statutes, or by the voice of his prophets, condemned all manner of sins, and punished them by his providence, if not by the priest and the ruler. Not merely were atheists, idolaters and murderers, and the most abandoned of men, of whom there seemed no hope, the subjects of law and discipline, but those who by the punishment of their lesser transgressions, might be kept from greater ones, which might prove their ruin. It was as a father that God chastened his children, because he loved them. Evil, we repeat again, were those days in Israel when rulers were not "a terror to evil doers," and "when every man did that which was right in his own eyes."

I will only add one thing as to God's government of the Jewish Church. Not adults only, but children were the subjects of discipline. Besides their circumcision, and all the injunctions given as to instruction in God's law, as to parental restraints and corrections, if, at a certain age, they did not come forward and own this covenant, and partake of the passover, they were regarded as cut off from Israel,—*their circumcision having become uncircumcision.*

#### SEC. V.—DISCIPLINE UNDER THE NEW DISPENSATION.

Let us now see whether this order was changed under the Christian dispensation, called the law of liberty, by comparison with the Jewish, which is styled a yoke of bondage. Is it the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, to be

released from the discipline of his Church, and allowed in all things to judge and act as we please? What do we read in the New Testament on the subject? Our Lord not only recognizes the Jewish priesthood and Jewish courts, as those who had rightly exercised discipline, but refers Christians to some body called *the Church*, for the settlement of differences among themselves, when other means failed. What select portion of the Church may have been here recognized, in whose hands discipline is placed, is a subject of dispute among Christians. The fact of some ecclesiastical court or tribunal is undoubted. St. Paul also, besides exercising it himself, enjoins it upon Timothy and Titus to see that it is done, and also on the Churches generally, giving some directions on the subject. I shall not in this place adduce the passages establishing what is affirmed, since they will be brought under the two succeeding heads of this charge, for other purposes, and because the fact cannot be disputed.

Let us consider what are the objects of discipline, and who are the subjects of it, under the New Testament dispensation. The two great ends of discipline, are the correction of offenders, and the prevention of sin in others, by the example of their punishment. Church discipline is not, as some seem to suppose, only for reprobates—persons supposed to be past hope, to have no part or lot in the kingdom above, and who should therefore be excluded from that below. God has not given it to us to know who these are. The father corrects the child whom he loves, in order to his good, separating him sometimes from the society of other children, not only for their good, but lest he should become so evil as to render it necessary that he be banished forever and disinherited. They are emphatically *sons* whom the father chastens. Wherefore St. Paul, in his 1st Epistle to the Corinthians, speaks of “delivering such an one to Satan, for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.” In the Epistle to Timothy

also he speaks of some in the following words: "whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme."\* In both of which instances, reformation is the declared object. Again, in his second Epistle to the Thessalonians, after injoining it upon the faithful to "withdraw themselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not to have any company with him, that he may be ashamed," he adds, "yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother." Such passages should correct the error of those who are fearful of exercising any discipline, even a temporary suspension, lest perchance it should be inflicted on one who is a child, though an erring child of God. If indeed separating one from the earthly Church for a time, were a certain exclusion from the heavenly, we might thus argue. But the kingdom of God on earth, and that in heaven, are different places. Separating a child of God for a time from the earthly kingdom, is one of the appointed means of insuring him a place in that above. If we are never to exercise discipline on one by suspension, until we are sure that he is not in a state of salvation, that if thus dying he would be certainly shut out of heaven, when should we ever exercise it; for who can say certainly,

\* *Note on the words "delivered unto Satan."*—Though the determining of the precise meaning of these words does not at all affect our assertion, that discipline is not for reprobates only—the utterly lost ones, if indeed we could know who they are—but also for the children of God, who are to be preserved and reclaimed by salutary correction; yet it may not be amiss to consider their probable meaning and the use made of them. Some are of opinion that this is only a scriptural expression for the standing ordinance of excommunication, and refers to those evil influences of the wicked one, to which those persons are particularly subject, who by their sins have deserved to be cast out of the Church, deprived of its ordinances, and exposed to shame among men. For the most part, however, the use of the term is confined to those days when God gave to the apostles power over the bodies of men, and when Satan was ready to be the executioner, by taking possession of them, and afflicting them with various diseases, which bodily punishments, called *destruction of the flesh*, might teach them not to blaspheme, and be one of the means of saving their spirits in the day of the Lord. Thus the Lord permitted Satan to afflict holy Job, by delivering his body unto him to be tormented for a season. "This being the general sense of the ancients," says Bingham, the great antiquarian of the Church, "we do not find that they ordinarily made use of this phrase in any of their forms of excommunication."



when the sin amounts to that "which is never to be forgiven." The Church in her fallible state cannot, with certainty, pronounce on any individual *anathema maranatha*.<sup>\*</sup> As to the other object of discipline, the prevention of evil to others, by permitting misconduct to go unpunished, it is so plain from scripture, and its importance so obvious to all, that I shall not dwell upon it, but proceed to speak of some of the subjects of it, as specified in scripture. Under the present head, I shall mention only one, as the others will necessarily appear under the following.

As in the Jewish Church children were circumcised, and thereby became debtors to do the whole law, and at an early age come forward, acknowledge this, and partake of the passover, so in the Christian, children were baptized, and thereby became debtors to receive and obey the gospel, their parents being directed to bring them up in the nurture (discipline) and admonition of the Lord. The old rule "train up a child in the way he should go," was still the law. In that very same way in which their Christian parents, and all adults should walk, children should be taught and made to follow. They and adult converts were baptized into the same faith, in the name of the same Father, Son and Spirit. There were not two religions, one for the child to learn and practice, and another for adults. Children were not to be

<sup>\*</sup> On the words "*Anathema Maranatha*."—The scriptural word *anathema*, or accursed, is often found in the ancient canons, being used to signify excommunication, or separation from the Church and its privileges. The addition of *maranatha*, which greatly strengthens the sentence, is not often found. It is supposed to mean, that the *Lord is come*, or *the Lord will come*, or *the Lord will come to judgment*. He, therefore, on whom the sentence *anathema maranatha* is inflicted, is one not only excommunicated from the Church on earth, but declared to be one whom the Lord has cursed and will destroy for ever.

The word *shammatha* among the Jews, which was used in pronouncing the highest sentence on incorrigible offenders, is supposed to correspond to this, and to have suggested it. In process of time, the Christian Church did sometimes venture thus to claim the prerogative of him, who alone has power to destroy both body and soul in hell. We leave that to the tender mercies of the would be infallible Church of Rome. Protestants, while separating offenders from certain privileges of the visible Church for a season, leave it to God to determine on their future condition, only warning the impenitent that except they repent they will perish forever, and that God will banish them with everlasting destruction from his presence.

trained in one way, and then when they came of age, to leave it for another. St. John, in one of his Epistles, writes to little children, young men and fathers, at a time when the name children was given to those under twelve years of age, and the name young men to those between the age of twelve and twenty, and that of fathers to those above twenty; and he makes no difference as to the way in which they should walk, or as to the religion they have embraced. It is a most fatal mistake which supposes, that children baptized into the Church of God should be taught and allowed many things, which it is confessed they must relinquish as improper so soon as they with their own mouths and consent profess the religion of Christ; that there is one way for the baptized, another for the communicants, baptism setting forth one kind of life, and the Lord's supper another. On the contrary, the very things which communicants should do in order to honor their profession, and make their calling and election sure, baptized children should be taught to do, as means of preparing them for a full profession in confirmation and the supper; so also the things which communicants should avoid and renounce, lest they draw them back to perdition, baptized children should be taught and made to avoid and renounce, as hindering their preparation for the ordinances, by the attainment of the repentance and faith promised for them. Whatsoever is said as to children, both under the law and gospel, must be so understood, and parents and ministers can only be consistent in thus executing the will of God. On parents and such as have the care of children, devolves almost entirely the duty of exercising godly discipline. They are *jure divino* ordained ministers for this purpose, over the young members of Christ's visible Church.

Let us now consider the sins which are the proper objects of discipline, whatever that discipline be, and what is the rule by which we are to decide on their character. In so

doing we ascertain who are the subjects of discipline among adults, according to the New Testament. Taking discipline in its most comprehensive sense, as now used among us, as consisting of private admonition, public reproof, exclusion from the Lord's supper, (for with civil pains and penalties we have happily nothing to do, these being left to the civil magistrate,) it must be admitted that whatsoever sins endanger the soul, and will, if persisted in, exclude from heaven, should be the subjects of discipline on earth, so far as they can be reached by it, with any hope of effect. Some there are of a high grade in the sight of God, and which will exclude from heaven, which yet cannot be reached by the sentence of exclusion here, and must therefore only be dealt with by the warnings of God's word and ministers. There are many secret sins, as envy, malice, lust of the heart, etc., which, unresisted and unrepented, effectually destroy the soul; but it is only when they become open and notorious, by words or deeds, that we can touch them by the hand of discipline. In this imperfect state of discipline, both in the Church and State, great crimes must sometimes go unpunished, because they cannot be established, while lesser ones are punished, because susceptible of proof from their notoriety. But He who sees and knows all things, reserves those who escape from men for his own discipline, both here and hereafter. This has ever been regarded and used as one argument for a future state of retribution. As to those things which constitute the evil living on which discipline should be exercised, even to exclusion, if necessary, because they will, if not repented of and forsaken, exclude from heaven, we read in the gospel, of drunkenness, extortion, adultery, lying, theft, uncleanness, lasciviousness, revelings, banquetings and such like. They who do such things, says the apostle, shall never enter the kingdom of heaven; neither, of course, should they be allowed to continue in, and disgrace and defile the Church on earth.

As to most of the acts which come under one or other of the above catalogue, none can justify them, or plead exemption from either civil or ecclesiastical penalty. The best civil codes in all ages have sentenced them. All Churches have made them liable to the discipline thereof. But there is a class of offences evidently included in the above general description, which both civil and religious laws have found more difficult to define and to punish, and for which some are more apt to plead, as being improper subjects for discipline. They are certain indulgences and pleasures in which human nature delights, and is unwilling to part with. As to certain grosser and more scandalous vices, it is conceded, that they should be forbidden and punished, but in regard to those things denominated amusements, which are classed under the heads of revellings and banquetings by the scripture, and to those called pomps and vanities by the Church, they cannot see the great evil of them. Now as to such things, the question is, are they injurious to the soul? Have they a tendency to shut us out of the kingdom of heaven? If so, they must be sinful, for the wages of sin is death. God will exclude none but sinners from heaven. What do the scriptures say of those things called pleasures? How many are the warnings in the Proverbs of Solomon, the Psalms of David, and the prophets, against the ruinous effect of what are called pleasures? What do the New Testament writers say as to "lovers of pleasure," "the carnally minded," "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life;" as to the woman who "liveth in pleasure being dead;" as to "denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, and living soberly, righteously and godly in this world;" as to young men being "sober minded?" So far from scripture being silent as to these things, and leaving every one to decide for himself—all of them being lawful—there is no class of sins more frequently and solemnly denounced, as destructive to the



soul, than this. A volume, rather than a tract, might be drawn from scripture, setting forth instances of such sins, the evil of them,—God's displeasure at them. It would be a useful employment for one just to collect and publish all these, without note or comment, and let the world and Church see how much more particular and strict the sacred writers are, or rather the Divine Spirit which moved them is, than the most strict of God's ministers and Churches are at this day. They will be surprised to see how God by his prophets and apostles has continued to denounce what seem trifles to some, as he did by Moses. We should find not merely rioting and drunkenness, but unbecoming motions of body, unseemly dress and all lightness, are noticed and condemned. And is not this approved by the consent of all mankind? Have not anxious parents and guardians, and others, been most fearful of these things for the young committed to their charge? Has not the voice of pleasure been that voice of the charmer, which has deluded the greatest numbers to their undoing. No matter what it be then that destroys souls, that is evil, and we must adopt the most effectual measures, whatever they may be, for suppressing it, in proportion to the danger thereof.

But it may be asked, by what rule does the gospel teach us to decide as to those things which must be regarded as sins worthy of the Church's censure? The answer must be, the word of God—the whole word of God. There is one abridgment of its laws, however, which is the sum and substance of all relating to our character and conduct towards God and man—the moral law, or ten commandments. All other scriptures are but explanations and examples of this. Our Lord's sermon on the mount, as well as other scriptures, teach us how to apply them to our hearts and lives. There is not a vice or virtue but must come under one of these laws. There is not an action, or indulgence, or pleasure, but will be condemned or approved by this law.

An improper desire, according to this, is adultery, a wrong feeling is murder. Of this, however, we shall speak more fully when we shew that such has been the use made of it in the determination of the proper subjects of discipline, in all ages of the Church. We have only to add, under this head, that when false doctrines are to be the subject of discipline, the word of God is again to be the standard, to which the Church must revert in drawing up her creed, by which heretics are to be rejected after due admonition. The gospel is to furnish our creed, the law our rule of morals, which rule, however, we find explained and enforced in the gospel.

Let us now briefly consider how and in what spirit discipline is to be exercised according to the gospel.

There are various ways according to the nature of the offence by which discipline is to be exercised. There is private admonition, public rebuke, warning of the danger of unworthy receiving, and positive exclusion from the Lord's supper. A minister should privately reprove in the first instance, when that is more likely to succeed, and the offence admits of it. In private he may also explain the nature of God's ordinances and the qualifications for them, thus preventing the unworthy and unprepared from wishing to come, or inducing them to withdraw. Those who sin openly, should be openly reproved, according to the apostle, if not by name, yet by denouncing the sins of which they are guilty. The nature of the Lord's supper, the danger of receiving it unworthily, of eating and drinking to our condemnation, should be faithfully set forth, as did St. Paul. In this manner many will be deterred from coming ignorantly, not discerning the Lord's body, or dishonoring their profession. When these methods fail, and any be disposed to come who live in sin, and bring reproach on the Church, then we must see what crimes are specified in scripture as subjecting to discipline. We shall find that God by his

Spirit and word has, from time to time, after the manner of all governments, besides laying down general principles, specified offences and evil practices as they arose, calling them by the names they have assumed. Still, however, as it was impossible to make a complete enumeration which should comprehend all evil things, such general phrases as these are used: "and such like"—"all unrighteousness and ungodliness"—"unworthily." It is, therefore, left to the Church in all subsequent ages to legislate, and her officers to execute according to the spirit of those general principles, or particular laws which are in the word. As to the spirit in which all discipline is to be exercised, it is the kindest of which man is capable. It is to be done in a spirit of meekness and love, with all long-suffering and patience, with a heart ready to break, as was that of the apostle. The elders should be reprov'd as fathers, the younger ones as brethren, and even when excluded, so that in some things we must not have fellowship with them, but rather withdraw ourselves; we must not count them as enemies, but rather admonish them as brethren, and seek to restore them, considering ourselves lest we also be tempted.

#### SECTION VI.—DISCIPLINE OF THE PRIMITIVE CHURCH.

Having thus briefly considered what may be learned on this subject from scripture, whether for authority or example, let us see how far the Christian Church, from the days of the apostles, has been governed by the same. The accounts we have of the first, and part of the second century, are so slight, that we cannot speak with historical certainty, but may surely be permitted to believe, that they were not unfaithful in obeying the injunctions and following the examples of the apostles. That discipline, always difficult, was sometimes in a measure neglected, even in the earliest days of the Church, may be inferred from the trouble which the apostles themselves had, and the disposi-

tion on the part of some to tolerate offenders, while they were yet alive. Converts from Jews and Gentiles, each desiring to bring in some things of doctrine and practice to which they were attached, gave much trouble, and did much injury to the Church for a long time. There was action and re-action between Christianity on the one side, and Judaism and Paganism on the other. If Christianity destroyed the two latter, it was also in some measure corrupted by them.

The state of discipline, and the character of any Church or civil community, are to be learned not only from the histories and other writings of the times, but chiefly from the canons and laws of those times. Many canons of the third, fourth, and fifth, and sixth centuries, have been transmitted to us. One code, indeed, professes to be of apostolic origin, but though of early date, and contributing something to a just exhibition of the early Church, it is generally denied the authority to which its name pretends. In examining these codes we are forcibly struck with two things.

1. That there must have been great corruption of morals in many of those who were enrolled among Christians, to call for canons forbidding such flagrant vices, and such a penitential discipline as was adopted.

2. That there must have been even in the worst times or Churches, no little vitality in many of the law-givers, and rulers, and people, to enable them to denounce and punish such vices, as well as some of less magnitude.

As to the great corruption of morals, living as the early Christians did in the midst of Jews and Gentiles, many of them, as we have said, converts from the same, strong was the temptation to comply with some of their customs and practice some of their vices. This should always be remembered by us in forming our estimate of the religion of those days. Though corruption did abound, yet God ful-



filled his word of promise to the Church, and was with her so as to keep a sufficient number faithful, to denounce all evil principles and practices; to pass wholesome laws; and, with more or less fidelity, to enforce them. It will be perceived that she kept the scriptures of the Old and New Testament in view, as to the main features of her discipline, though she doubtless sometimes retained what should have been abolished and carried too far what was designed to be used. For instance, it has been made a complaint, that her legislation was too particular, sometimes specifying vices or practices too gross to be even mentioned; at others, descending to things too trivial to be the subjects of legislation, and interfering with that liberty wherewith Christ has made us free. Now this is precisely the complaint made against many of the laws of God for his ancient people. It is said that they are either too trivial or else refer to vices which ought not to be named. Such persons, if considering the condition of the Jewish nation in regard to those around, and the reasons influencing Jehovah thus to legislate, would not thus find fault. So those who condemn the legislation and discipline of the early Christian Church, would do well to acquaint themselves with the reasons thereof, growing out of their position in the midst of heathen corruptions. Let them remember also that the canons of the primitive Church were for all the baptized members of the Church, who, at that time, whether baptized in infancy or at a later age, were immediately confirmed and received the Lord's supper, and were henceforth communicants in full membership with the Church.

Only let us imagine our Conventions to be legislating for all who were baptized in infancy, and a great change would immediately ensue. Laws would be multiplied to include the numerous offences committed by the whole population of nominal Christians. How much more of reproach, too,

would be cast upon the Church, if all were considered in full membership from their infancy up.\*

Doubtless the primitive Church, however mistaken, thought that it was justified in this course by the example of the Jewish Church in which, as we have seen, all who were circumcised were put under discipline, and regarded as God's adopted children, until by their own act or neglect they were cut off from Israel. Thus, also, doubtless, did they think to obey the injunction of the apostle to bring up their children in the *nurture* as well as admonition of the Lord. It will also be seen, that as to the modes of exercising discipline, the private and public admonition of

\* Surprising as it may seem to us that the primitive Church should have fallen into such an error, as that of administering confirmation and the Lord's supper to infants immediately after their baptism, and thus enrolling them as communicants, there are some in our day whose excessive attachment to ancient times has led them to desire a restoration of that custom. The intimations to that effect in some of the writings of the Tractarians are not to be misunderstood. They may perhaps reason, as some in early times perhaps did, that children being unconscious subjects of an ordinance, can present no bar or obstacle to its spiritual efficacy, and therefore are all certainly regenerated at baptism in the highest sense, and if in baptism, may not the same be true of the grace of confirmation and of the Lord's supper, and is it not safest to administer these also at once, and thus secure all the blessings of God's appointments to the new-born child. If the child then receives baptismal grace, and the grace of confirmation, and of the Eucharist, surely it must be regarded in the highest sense as the child of God, and must be treated as such, and regarded as the true representative of our religion. Those who think it indispensable to a faithful and effectual use of religious education, that we regard all baptized children as in the highest sense the new-born children of God, must see that the ancients who thought they received not only baptismal grace, but confirming and eucharistic grace in their infancy, had still greater reason to regard the children of the Church as having all the fullness of grace in them, and to expect to be on that account successful in their efforts to preserve them as temples of the Holy Ghost. The children of the Church in those ages, when such was the belief and practice, ought certainly to have been the best that ever were on earth, and their succession ought never to have failed. But why, if such were the case, the extreme corruption which soon came upon the Church, at least on great numbers of those called Christians, and why the necessity of so many laws and so much discipline? The number of nominal Christians by whom the religion of Christ was judged, was also increased in another way besides this infant confirmation and communion. Jews and Gentiles even at a very early age, if expressing a desire to become Christians, were admitted to be catechumens by the imposition of hands, and allowed to attend certain services. Not only this, but they also were called *Christians*; said to be "*sanctified after a certain manner*;" were subject to discipline; liable, for certain sins, to be put back to a lower degree and kept from baptism for a longer or shorter period. They also represented the Church, being Christians in distinction from Jews and Gentiles, whose religion they had renounced. See Canons of the early Church, and Bingham's *Antiquities*.

offenders, the general laws of determining the sins to be punished, and the specifications of offences from time to time, they sought to make scripture their model. That the Church in those days was fallible, as it has been ever since, and made great mistakes, its fondest admirers must admit. Some things which were actually done, and other things which were attempted by it, doubtless proceeded from false views of some part of the Christian system, and laid the foundation for great corruptions in doctrine and practice. Much also that was done in the way of law and discipline under the influence of right views, and in a right spirit, would be either useless, or altogether inexpedient, or even madness now, in the changed circumstances of the times. But let us beware how we deal out a wholesale condemnation of her well meant efforts, lest we be found to censure some things which God approved and blessed.\* In proof of the false judgment which is often passed upon many of the canons of the early Churches, through ignorance or inconsideration of the reasons for their adoption, I will mention only one instance. By some of the early canons, it was forbidden to fast on the Lord's day, or to kneel in the prayers of that day, it being regarded as a day of holy rejoicing. This seems an unwarrantable interference with conscience and Christian liberty; but if we examine into the reason for it, we shall find that an important principle was concerned. The Judaizers in the Church still adhering to their own Sabbath, condemned the Christian Sabbath, and sought to put contempt on it by fasting and kneeling down, and thus treating it as a day of humiliation

\* Mr. Taylor, in his *Ancient Christianity*, which is the most unfavorable work I know of, as to the early Church, nevertheless, admits that mingled with incipient errors on the subject of celibacy, the priesthood and sacraments, which afterwards developed themselves so sadly, there was much of most sincere and zealous piety in very many of the early Christians. If all who were baptized were to be reckoned as the representatives of our holy religion, doubtless there were then, as ever since, a large number of most unworthy ones.

instead of rejoicing. It is thus we may explain and justify very many of the early canons which seem strange to us in this day. Having made these general observations on what our mother Church speaks of, as "The godly discipline of the primitive Church," and on the sincere, zealous, though sometimes mistaken piety of the same, let us proceed to a more particular consideration of some of the canons which justify us in what has been said. We shall select those which relate to some things which certain professing Christians, in all ages, have attempted to plead for as allowable.

In the Laodicean canons, passed in 367, it is decreed that Christians ought not to use wanton dancing at their weddings, but to have a modest dinner and supper. That they of the priesthood and clergy (those called the clergy being inferior officers in the Church, as singers, readers, etc.,) ought not to gaze on fine shows at weddings or other feasts, but before the musicians enter to rise up and retreat. "That they of the priesthood and clergy, or even the laity, ought not to club together for great eating and drinking bouts." These latter were probably among those things which St. Paul denominated "revelings, banquetings, etc." In the African code of 418 it is ordered, "Let not the sons of clergymen (that is of the inferior ministers of the sanctuary,) manage public shows, nor even be spectators of them; and it has always been enjoined on all Christians, that they go not where blasphemy is used." "That clergymen do not go to victualling houses to eat or drink, but only upon necessity on their travels." These places were doubtless much abused, as many in these days are. "That reconciliation (that is admission to the communion,) be not denied to actors or stage players, or apostates on their conversion." All such persons were by canon excluded on account of their profession. "That if any one desire to forsake any ludicrous exercise, and become a Christian, no one be allowed to tempt or force him to such exercise." It seems



that to become a Christian, involved the necessity of forsaking such things. All parents and older Christians should think of this in relation to their children and the younger ones of the Church.

#### THE TRULLAN CANONS OF 683.

These forbid making lascivious pictures—acting of farces—baiting beasts with dogs—dancing on the stage—the lewd festivities on the Kalends—attending feasts in honor of the god Pan—the public mystic dancings, both of men and women—tragical and comical masks—that either sex wear the habit of the other—also the bacchanalian feasts; on pain of deposition to the clergy and excommunication to the laity. Those called apostolical canons, and which are of doubtful date, being by some ascribed to the second century, say, “Let the Bishop, Priest, or Deacon, who spends his time in dice or drinking, either desist, or be deposed, the sub-deacon, reader, singer or layman, be excommunicated.”

#### TESTIMONIES OF BINGHAM AND CAVE.

The following passages from Bingham’s *Antiquities of the Christian Church*, and Cave’s *Primitive Christianity*, will add force to these canons and to the remarks preceding and accompanying them. Mr. Bingham, in various places of his sixth volume, refers to the ancient canons as forbidding the public shows, games, theatres, dancings, etc., and says that they were condemned for two reasons:—1st, because they were against the spirit of the second and seventh commandments, which forbid all encouragement of idolatry, and all impurity; both of which attended these exhibitions. 2ndly. Because they were the very works of the devil, and the pomps and vanities of the world, which they renounced at their baptism as ministering to the sinful lusts of the flesh. “All who had any concern in the exercise or management of these unlawful sports, and all frequenters of

them, were obliged either to quit these practices, or be liable to excommunication, so long as they continued to follow them, not only because a great deal of impurity and cruelty was committed in them, but also because they contributed to the maintenance of idolatry, which was an appendage to them.. All these were comprised in the pomp and service of the devil, which every Christian had renounced at his baptism.”—vol. vii, p. 191. Even the holding such offices under the civil government, where the heathen had rule, as required them to have anything to do with such things, was forbidden; or if the offices were accepted, those holding them were debarred communion during the term of office. The plea of curiosity, he says, was not allowed as sufficient excuse for witnessing a heathen sacrifice; a servant, however, attending his master on duty was excused. Bingham also shows that the writing or reading of lascivious books and plays was forbidden, and mentions an instance of a Bishop who wrote one, and was deprived of his office because he would not recant it. He shows, in like manner, that immodest apparel and decoration were forbidden to Christians. In vol. iii, we have a particular account of the baptismal renunciation, from various authors. One of the forms, according to St. Ambrose, was, “I renounce the devil and his works, the world and its luxury and pleasures.” Another, according to St. Jerome, was, “I renounce thee Satan, and thy pomp, and thy vices, and thy world.” Sometimes, he says, “the games and shows, which were part of the devil’s pomp, were expressly mentioned in this form of renunciation,” as it is in Salvian: “I renounce the devil, his pomps, and his shows, and his works;” and this was after idolatry was removed from the public shows. The same form substantially has continued to this day in the Christian Church, and is meant to condemn substantially the same vain, lewd and improper things. If not, then is it an unmeaning service. Moreover, the ancients always traced it to the time of

St. Peter, who speaks of "the answer of a good conscience towards God" as being the saving thing in baptism. At the time, however, that idolatry ceased, though lewdness still remained in their public entertainments, the Church had become degenerate, discipline was relaxed, though the canons were the same; and in many instances, the only opposition made to worldly conformity, was the faithful denunciation of these things by those Bishops, priests and laymen, who themselves continued faithful. Some such there ever have been, making an uninterrupted stream of testimony on the part of the Church against these things. In proof that very many of the early Christians were, from principle and in practice, opposed to such things, though discipline was needful to restrain many, especially when all catechumens and all the baptized, who then also became communicants, though infants, were to be governed, I adduce a few passages from Cave's History of the Early Christians. After speaking of the simplicity of their manners, dress and entertainments, he says, "Nor were they more studious of pleasures and recreations abroad, than they were of fineness and bravery at home. They went not to public feasts, nor frequented the public shows, that were made for the disport and entertainment of the people, and this was so notorious, that the heathen charged it upon them as part of their crime." Observe how he, in Minutius Felix, draws it up: "The Romans (says he) govern and enjoy the world, while you in the meantime are careful and mopish, abstaining even from lawful pleasures; you visit not the shows, nor are present at the *pomps*, nor frequent the public feasts; you abhor the holy games, the sacrificial meats and drinks, crown not your heads with garlands, nor perfume your bodies with sweet odours,—a ghastly, fearful and miserable people." To which it is replied, "that they could not be present at such places without affronting their modesty, and offering a distaste and horror to their minds;" that at their

baptism they had solemnly engaged “to renounce the devil and all his works, pomps and pleasures; that is, says St. Cyril, the sights and sports of the theatre, and such like vanities.” It appears then, that the primitive Church, after the example of the apostles, specified not merely the grosser vices about which there was no dispute, but also certain pleasurable ones, for which some have always pleaded. It appears also, that after the example of the apostolic rules and law-givers, she often concluded the specification with some general terms, “such like,” &c., comprehending offences of the same class.

We shall find also, that, as has already been hinted at, the young, the very young, were the subjects of discipline, the nurture of the Lord, as enjoined in the Old and New Testaments. Even before they were baptized, if Jewish or Gentile children, they might at an early age become catechumens and come under the discipline of the Church. At what age those who were baptized in infancy were held responsible, as older communicants were, is not specified, for it was impossible to say when they become responsible before God. In answer to that question, we find one of the canons of Timothy, Bishop of Alexandria, thus deciding: “According to every one’s capacity and understanding—to one at ten, to another when older.” The discipline of children was chiefly placed in the hands of parents. One of the canons of the African Church commands that “Bishops and clergy do not emancipate their children, so as to permit them to live at their own discretion, until they be well assured of their good government of themselves.” That is a canon which should be repeated from age to age in every Church, for the benefit of all parents. In none is it more needed than in our day, especially in reference to all worldly indulgences, as to which the children are allowed to dictate to the parents.

As to the spirit and manner of exercising discipline in the



primitive Church we shall see that the rule of our Lord and the apostles was followed. The danger of unworthy communing was continually set forth. Private admonition, except in cases not admitting of it, was first resorted to. Then the lesser excommunication, or temporary separation. Then the greater excommunication. The ministers were enjoined to use great prudence and tenderness. In one of the Trullan canons it is written: "They who have the power of binding and loosing, and are intrusted with the principal pastorship, must consider the quality of the offence, and the disposition of the penitent, and temper the spiritual medicine according to St. Basil's rule, viz: where rigor will not do, use as much tenderness as the practice of the Church will allow of." Nor were the private members of the Church entirely subject to the will of one individual, without any right of appeal. The dioceses were then so numerous and so small, that the Bishops exercised all discipline in the first place; but by the Nicene canon, in every province, the Bishops of the same met together twice a year "that examination might be made whether any had been excommunicated by the too great severity or rashness of the Bishop." Afterwards we find a canon in one of the Churches, appointing a council of three Bishops for this purpose, that the others might not be taken so much from their dioceses.

We have thus considered the main features of the primitive discipline, which we doubt not was honestly designed to carry out the principles and follow the example of God's government of the Jewish and of the apostolic Church. We say nothing of the penitentiary discipline, by which certain offences were punished, by more or less of exclusion from the very temples of religion for a term, sometimes a long term of years. This appears to us the most unaccountable and indefensible of all parts of it, one which we must suppose originated in error, and led to much worse

error. It was thus, perhaps, they thought to fulfill the words, that "sinners should not stand in the congregation of the righteous." The public confession of sins before the congregation to which such blessings were promised through prayer and absolution, was found to produce great evil, by leading some to confess acts unknown to others, and the disclosure of which was calculated to promote strife and scandal. It was therefore abandoned. Such disclosures were forbidden. Open and notorious evil living, a term much used since, and specifying rather the publicity than the nature and degree of the transgression, was the only sinning to be punished. Still the desire for priestly absolution was then so strong, that it soon led to private auricular confession, with its absolution, in which the most secret sins might be disclosed to the confessor, and absolved on such terms as he should dictate, without the public scandal and many evils of public confessions. Private confession and absolution, with the penance enjoined, soon took the place of primitive discipline, and helped, with other things, to complete the corruption of the Church, and prepare the way for the great apostacy of Mahomet, which, if it had not ministered so much to the corrupt propensities of our nature, and opposed itself so entirely to the monastic system, might have swept away yet more of professing Christendom. A flood of licentiousness now poured itself over the Church of God. The Sabbath day was reduced to half its period; so far as even the form of religion was concerned, the remainder being devoted to sports and games, largely partaking of the spirit of those which the early Church had condemned on all days. At length came on the Reformation, whose voice was as thunder, in denouncing the entire perversion of the apostolic and primitive institution of discipline both as to ministers and people. As we have already said, the claim of the Romish Church, to be even a part of the Church of Christ, came now to be questioned by many,

not more for her want of sound doctrine, than for the absence of all godly discipline and the prevalence of most corrupt manners. One only exception was there to this general corruption. The Church in the wilderness, the persecuted Waldenses, and those included in that name, alone presented any thing like a pure Church of God. Simple manners, holy living and a pure faith, were kept amongst them by means of the free use of the sacred scriptures, the right understanding and use of the sacraments, and a godly discipline.

#### SEC. VII.—DISCIPLINE OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

The history of our mother Church is so closely connected with that of our own, that it must be both interesting and useful to study it well. The history of its discipline is a painful, though not unprofitable one. Whatever may have been the case with the Church on the continent, the circumstances attending the reformation of that of England were peculiarly unfavorable to the establishment of a pure discipline either for clergy or people. In the mysterious providence of God, a most licentious king, Henry VIII, was used as the chief instrument for casting off the Papal yoke, and establishing religious independence in Great Britain. Availing himself of his position and means, he not only retained the title of Defender of the Faith, given him by the Pope, but made himself Supreme Head of the Church, transmitting the same to his successors on the throne. By the second canon of the Church of England, it is declared that the king of England is what godly kings among the Jews and Christian Emperors in the primitive Church were: "*Supreme defenders of the faith, etc.*," and any who denied it were excommunicated. Henry not only assumed these titles, but exercised the authority conveyed by them. He busied himself in all that was done, and exercised his royal veto at pleasure. Cranmer and all

his valiant host were obliged to yield to him in many things. To excommunicate him for his evil ways was impossible, as it has been thus to do with any of his successors. The State became supreme. Its chief officers, the heads of colleges, fellows and undergraduates, were ex officio communicants, whatever their characters might be. The king and Parliament had a veto on all the acts of the convocation, while convocations existed, and must confirm their acts in order to their validity. Bishops instead of being chosen, as in the better days of the Church, by ministers and people, were appointed by the crown. The ancient synods composed of the Bishop and his Presbyters and certain laymen, which met once or twice a year to confer about the Church and its discipline in each diocese, were laid aside, and a much less effective system substituted. The Reformers mourned over this defect in the Reformation, longed and hoped for better days. Cranmer himself drew up a system which was published, but never adopted. A lamentation for this evil was introduced into one of the services of the Church of England. In her commination office she speaks of a *certain godly discipline of the primitive Church*, and wishes it might be restored. Whether one part, especially referred to, could, with advantage, be restored or not, still we see in this declaration her desire for godly discipline and confession, that therein she was wanting. Certain measures were proposed and attempted in place thereof, but Bishop Pilkington mourns over the inefficiency of the same, and says, all granted that discipline was necessary, and desired to have it; that which was proposed, however, was like a spider's web, so gentle that the rich would not care for it, but would live as they list; that the laws and the officers appointed to execute them would be despised; "that there were few able men to be found who would dare to wrestle with the rich in correction." In this connection he alludes to the case of Ambrose and Theodosius, the



latter, though an Emperor, being suspended from the communion by the former for some great crime. Concerning which, the Bishop says: "And how humbly he obeyed it; but whether was more to be praised he that durst do it, or the other that would obey it, I cannot tell." He carefully, however, distinguishes this from those acts of excommunication by proud Popes, exercising their authority for far other purposes.\* That the early Reformers condemned those sins of every class which the fathers did, and that they brought them to the same test, viz: the moral law, understood in its spirit as well as letter, and to the baptismal renunciations, is most evident from their writings which have come down to us.† As to the grosser sins none will doubt; as to some others, let the following suffice. Thomas Becon, chaplain to Archbishop Cranmer, says, that the seventh commandment forbids, among other things, reading of amorous books, idle jesting, vain pastimes, idleness, banquetings, evil company, as provocations to lust: because St. Paul says, "let no filthy communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying." "Notable," he says, "is the saying of Tobias' wife: I have not kept company with those who have spent their time in

\* Archbishop Sandys says:—"The rod is as necessary in the hands of the pastor as the staff." He presses the duty of discipline on both civil and religious rulers, after the example of Nehemiah, who blamed the rulers for certain things which grieved him sore, because they dishonored God—also after the example of Christ, who drove quite out of the temple those who profaned it. He condemns Baron, a dissolute and careless high priest, who permitted the inferior priests to frequent games and heathenish exercises to the disgrace of their calling.

† It is a well known fact, that in all the Catechisms, whether in the Episcopal or other Churches of the Reformation, and they abounded, the moral law was so expounded as, under the seventh commandment, to forbid all things which directly or indirectly tempted to adultery. So, indeed, do all faithful explanations of it. How could any other be given with our Lord's sermon on the mount before us? Even our own very brief Catechism explains it as enjoining "temperance, soberness and chastity." All explanations also of the baptismal vows in Episcopal Catechisms have pursued the same method, bringing the same sins under their condemnation. Bishop Hooper, in his explanation, says of fine and improper dressing, that there may be "an adultery of apparel." None more decided on this subject than Archb.shop Cranmer on the seventh commandment.

sport, nor been partakers with them of a light behaviour." He enjoins it on young women to avoid idleness, and to be engaged in diligent employment—"not to run about unto vain spectacles, games, pastimes, plays, interludes, etc.—not to keep company with vain, light and wanton persons, whose delight is in singing, dancing, skipping, playing, etc." Extravagance and immodesty in dress also is condemned. Speaking of Christmas festivals, he says: "These be no Christmas banquets, but Christless and devilish banquets. They be not feasts for Christian men, but for Gentiles and Ethnicks." Again, "Use not the company of a woman who is a player and dancer, and hear her not lest thou perish through her enticing." Idleness, as leading to licentiousness, is classed under the seventh commandment. Becon also condemns sumptuous funerals as exhibiting the pomps and vanities of the world; quoting one of the fathers who said, "Our Lord arose naked from the grave and his followers ought not to desire superfluous and unprofitable cost, proud and vain charges." "Simply, not sumptuously, honestly, not honorably (that is, expensively), let me be buried." It is pleasing to observe how this sentiment was felt and acted out by the late Queen Adelaide of England. During her life she had been a most exemplary Christian, abounding in alms-deeds and good works—at her death she requested that her funeral should be conducted in the most simple manner, not with that expense and parade which she considered among the pomps and vanities that she had renounced at her baptism; which request was faithfully complied with by order of the present Queen. But the private sentiments and faithful preaching of the Reformers, did not avail to cleanse the Church of the corruption of morals and manners which had been settling upon it for ages. A large number of her clergy were either infected with Romanism, or ignorant and feeble. Romish manners still prevailed to a great extent, and especially those sports

which desecrated the holy Sabbath. Many would assemble together from different parishes and spend the afternoons of the Sabbath in all kinds of merry making and games. In the time of Edward VI, injunctions were issued against them. At different times, in successive reigns, some of the judges in the districts ordered their suppression, and directed the ministers to read the order in their Churches. The effort for their suppression was renewed in the reign of James I, but all that could be gotten from him, was to issue a book of sports declaring what were lawful amusements, and forbidding any to go out of their own parishes to use them, allowing them to indulge in the same in the Church yards and houses around. The sports allowed were dancing, vaulting, archery, feasts of dedication, Church ales, clerk ales, bid ales. The object of the feasts and ales was to raise money to beautify the Churches, to pay the clerk, to set up poor, decayed persons by the money raised on such occasions. Those who provided the feasts and sold the ale received liberal custom and reward. The plea put in for these sports and feasts was, that it brought more people to Church on those days than could be otherwise gotten; that it increased charity to the poor, produced good feeling among the people, and led to the reconciling of differences. See Burns' Ecclesiastical Law, 1 and 2 volumes. Those who opposed them, declared that they produced strife, broils, intemperance and profaneness. And if these were not the consequences of such assemblages and merry makings, human nature must have been very different then from what it is now, or ever had been before. The attempt at suppressing them by some of the judges in their districts, was renewed in the time of Charles I and Archbishop Laud. Complaints being made of them to the king, he renewed the order of his father as to the book of sports, and commanded that every clergyman in the kingdom should read it from the pulpit. Some refused to do it,

and were ejected from their livings. Others read it, and then read the fourth commandment after it. This order was afterwards repealed, and laws for the better observance of the Sabbath were passed. This controversy in the time of Charles I renewed a discussion which had before been carried on, concerning the obligation of the Sabbath as a part of the moral law. It will surprise some in our day to know, that those who considered themselves the truest Churchmen went so far in opposing the strict observance of the Sabbath. There were those who were jealous of its interference with the claims of other holy days of the Church. If Archbishop Laud did not counsel the king to renew the book of sports, as has been charged upon him, it is certain that he and his adherents did oppose themselves to those who sought to promote the contrary use of that day. This may readily be accounted for in a good measure by the violence of party spirit, which was now at its height, between the Puritans and other members of the Church. That there was error on both sides in many things we doubt not; and that even as to the Sabbath the Puritans may have carried their views to an excess, while the advocates of such an use of it as the book of sports allowed, cannot be defended.\* It is worthy of remark, that some of those in

\*So violent were the prejudices of dissatisfied Puritans and strenuous Churchmen towards each other in those days, that it is difficult from any histories or other writings to form a true estimate of their real or comparative merit. The author of this charge has long since determined to take as his guide and authority above all others, the testimony of the good, the great, the pious, Sir Matthew Hale, as found in some few pages of his life and writings. Sir Matthew Hale lived during the most painfully interesting period of the English history, and from his intimacy with Puritans, Non-conformists and Churchmen, and the high esteem in which he was held by all, may be trusted beyond any other, for accuracy of knowledge and soundness of judgment. Though differing much from him in theological matters, he defended Archbishop Laud when on his trial, and would have defended king Charles, if defence had been permitted, as he thought that both of them were unjustly dealt with, though both greatly in fault. He was intimate with Bishop Wilkins, and Tillotson, and Mr. Baxter, and labored hard to get through Parliament a bill of comprehension which he had drawn up, by which to reconcile differences. As to the Churchmen, he thought they were too severe in the course pursued towards the Puritans. As to the Puritans, he thought "they were good men, but had narrow souls, who would break the peace of the Church about such inconsiderable matters as the points in difference were."



England, who show such a partiality for Laudian Church principles, and such a veneration for antiquity, have manifested a leaning to this very thing. As the primitive Church forbade fasting on the Lord's day, because a day of rejoicing, and Rome assigns one-half of it to merry making, they would relax also, and yield something to the calls of human nature for light amusements on that day. One of their leaders in the British Parliament, has either written a book or made some motion to that effect within the last few years.

What I have said must show that we cannot look to the Church of England as an example of godly discipline, and yet we may find much in it to strengthen our conviction of its importance, and much to effect in its unavoidable absence that which discipline is designed to promote. God employs various instruments for effecting one and the same object, so that if one is out of place, others may succeed to it, and do some of its duty, if it cannot accomplish all. Archbishop Sandys says, "There be three ways for guarding the vineyard of the Lord—1st. The faithful preaching of the word; 2ndly. The holy conversation of ministers; 3rdly. The discipline of the Church." "This last net," as he calls it, will take hold, when the two former fail. It held that incestuous Corinthian whom no other way could have taken." Now let us see how she has endeavored to perform her duty in all these respects, and how far succeeded.

1st. She commands her ministers faithfully to preach the whole word of God, and read the same to the people, whereby their souls may be converted to God, and thus built up in him. Especially does she make them give faithful views

As to the disputes about the Sabbath and the proper mode of spending it, he was entirely against those loose Churchmen who so shamefully profaned it, being a most strict observer of it, leaving behind him a strong testimony concerning the benefits of its due celebration. His letters to his grand-children show that he had no sympathy for light and trifling pastimes, games of chance, etc. As to the theatre, his condemnation is very strong, and his example in renouncing it at eighteen years of age is worthy to be followed.



of the sacraments, and the danger of receiving them unworthily. See how her article on the subject of the Lord's supper, and her whole communion service (the same with our own), warn against the unworthy receiving, and bid various descriptions of sinners by name not to come, lest it be to their condemnation. This cannot but produce great effect in deterring the unworthy. Such was the preaching of the early Reformers. See also how this was done in the Homilies which were ordered to be read in all the Churches. In the Homily on the worthy receiving of the supper it is declared, that "newness of life and godliness of conversation" are required of those who partake, as was the case with those who partook of the sacraments of Moses, some of whom God overthrew because "they coveted after evil things." It is declared that we must "be pure from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, lest we eat and drink our own condemnation." It declares that "here be tokens of pureness and innocency of life, whereby we may perceive that we ought to purge our souls from all uncleanness, iniquity and wickedness, lest when we eat this mystical bread, as Origen saith, we eat in an unclean place, that is, in a soul defiled and polluted with sin." Again, "we both read in St. Paul that the Church at Corinth was scourged of the Lord for misusing the Lord's supper; and we may plainly see Christ's Church there nine years miserably vexed and oppressed for the horrible profanation of the same. Wherefore let us all, universal and singular, behold our own lives and manners to amend them." Otherwise, "it must needs come to pass that as wholesome meat received into a sour stomach corrupteth and marreth all, and is the cause of further sickness; so shall we eat this bread and drink this cup to our eternal destruction." Again, "Why cried the Deacon in the primitive Church, *If any be holy let him draw near?* Was it not because this table received no unholy, unclean, or sinful guests?" Thus did all the Reformers

preach. Bishop Hooper says, to the unworthy, "the sacraments be not profitable, but damnable." Becon quotes Hirome as saying, "All that be lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, eat not the flesh and drink not the blood of Christ." And St. Cyprian as saying, "none do eat of this lamb but the true Israelites;" and himself says, "as corporal meat, if it find a stomach occupied with adverse and corrupt humors, doth hurt the more," so "this spiritual meat, if it find any man polluted with malignity and evil, shall destroy him the more, *not of the own nature of it*, but through the fault of him that receiveth it." It is thus that numbers of holy men ever since the Reformers, preached in warning words to the unworthy, while all, even the most faithless of her ministers, have been obliged to preach from the desk and chancel what the Bible and Prayer Book speak on the subject of unworthy receiving.

2ndly. How much has been done by the holy conversation of faithful men, whose lips and lives have privately warned the wicked against a false profession and unworthy living. How solemn are the ordination vows of her ministers, how sacred the promise to preach the word faithfully and administer the sacraments rightly. Much has been done in this way also towards the promotion of true piety and the establishment of correct views of the communion. What an invaluable blessing we have in our Liturgy and the word of God publicly used, and what a help in the private intercourse of the minister with his people, especially with the young, in training them up so as not to need the rude hand of discipline, or even the kind voice of warning.

3rdly. But our mother Church is not without her code of discipline, which, of itself, however embarrassed in its execution, is not without its effect. She has her canons for clergy as well as laity, and her positive rubrics specifying and enjoining discipline, in close connection with the very words of the service. She commands the minister not to

suffer the evil liver to approach, and thereby commands him also not to draw near. In her canons, besides repeating the general directions of the rubric, she is sometimes more particular. She declares in one of her canons on godly conversation in her ministers, "that they should be examples to the people to live well and christianly;" "that they should not resort to taverns or ale houses for other than honest necessities;" "that they should not spend their time idly, by day or by night, playing at dice, cards, or tables, or any other unlawful games." Moreover, she has appointed lay officers, called Church Wardens, Sidesmen, Questmen, to present all offenders among the laity to the Ordinary. Besides specifying a number of the greater crimes, it is added, or "any other uncleanness and wickedness of life," thus, not binding the informers or executors of discipline to the mere names of sins, which might be changed to avoid penalty. Moreover, to show what use she wished to make of private admonition and warning, and to put to shame the unworthy, she orders in one of her canons that before every communion, either on the preceding day or on the morning thereof, every one desiring to partake shall inform the minister of such his desire. None can question that the design of this was to facilitate and ensure the keeping of unworthy persons from the Lord's table, for their own and the Church's sake, by the opportunity it afforded of private advice, warning and prohibition. That law enforced, how many unworthy ones would rather withdraw from the communion than subject themselves to this private ordeal. This part of discipline, which is only required in our Diocese on one occasion, that is, before the first approach to the table, was thus required on every occasion. However inconvenient and difficult of execution, and however much neglected, it still remains among the canons in evidence of the sense and wishes of the English Church on the subject. It may be further remarked, that in a country where Church

and State were united, and the latter predominant, and where all were expected, and many were required to commune under certain penalties, and in order to office, the civil magistrate was expected to execute the laws of Parliament, which legislated for Christians as citizens. The Reformers dwell much on this, and refer to the Old and New Testaments in calling on the rulers to be "a terror to evil doers," and bidding all to obey them in the Lord.

One other feature I would refer to in the scheme of discipline of the English Church, in which she agrees with the Jewish, Apostolic and Primitive Church, which is, that it is not designed to force men to religion who have none, nor to punish those only who are lost ones and cast away, as to all human appearance, but for the children of the kingdom, as well as pretenders. One of the Reformers quotes Tertullian as saying, "It is not religion to force a religion which ought to be willingly received." Another quotes Cyprian as saying, "The object of discipline is to make us perpetually to abide in Christ and live to God." Wherefore he says, not only "*gravissima et extrema delicta*—the greatest and most heinous of crimes—sed *minora delicta*—the less ones were punished, so cutting off sin in its bud, and by the excision of its less acts and ebullitions, preventing its more gross and scandalous eruptions." The two great objects of discipline are set forth in the English Communion service, which declares that the subjects of it "are to be punished in this world, that their souls might be saved in the day of the Lord; and that others, admonished by their example, might be the more afraid to offend." Such are almost the words, and altogether the doctrine of the Apostles.

But now it may be asked, if there have been all these guards and fences, these cherubims and seraphims with flaming swords, around our mother Church, to prevent the admission of the unworthy to the Lord's supper; if all these



provisions are made for the exercise of godly discipline on those who have been admitted; if the clergy, by canon and by their solemn ordination vows, are required to be such examples to the laity, especially in their abstinence from worldly dissipation; how is it that there have been, almost from the first years of the Reformation, such heavy complaints against the Church, for the misconduct of both ministers and people, especially the former; that her own best friends have acknowledged it and mourned over it; that reformation has been ever called for and promised; that so many secessions on this very ground have taken place for more than two centuries; that Tractarians, who boast themselves the only true Churchmen, and those most opposed to them, join with Dissenters, in either taunting the Church with this defect, or mourning over it and hoping for reformation? And how is it that some, who by reason of their immorality are more worthy of prisoners' fare in some place of civil correction, are compelled by their office to sit down at the table of the Lord? How is it that even now, great and blessed as the change has been, that some few even of the clergy, may be seen where once numbers were, at the ball-room, the card-table, the theatre, and such like places? It is difficult to make an answer to this which will be intelligible, much less acceptable. One must be well acquainted with the whole history of the civil and ecclesiastical courts and laws in England, in all their intermixtures one with the other, in order to understand and estimate the excuse derived therefrom. Doubtless much of that which is evil might have been prevented, as it has been within the last fifty years or more, by the faithful use of the other instruments which we have mentioned, and much of it may be ascribed to other causes; but making due allowance for other things, it must be admitted that very much of the want of discipline in the English Church is to be ascribed to the uncertainty, difficulty and expense of suits, in the courts to which clergy



are liable to be called for acts of discipline. An appeal from the decisions of Bishops and ministers against either clergy or laity, may at once be had by any one who is able and desirous to do it, and the costs are very great. This has ever been considered the greatest of all the grievances, to which, in the Church of England, faithful Bishops and clergy are liable. Let me mention two instances by way of proof and illustration. On my visit to England in '41, a minister of the highest standing in the Church mentioned the following cases:—There was in his Church a communicant of intemperate habits, who had for sometime been a reproach to it. He was anxious to remove that reproach, but knew that it was a case in which, if suspension took place, he would probably be summoned into the courts on a charge of slander, and that the trial must be tedious, vexatious and most expensive. He had neither time nor the means to spare. He was however resolved to do something, by which he might vindicate himself before a congregation which well knew that the individual was unworthy. After having no doubt used all private admonition in vain, on a certain occasion of administering the Lord's supper he passed him by. Perhaps on the spot the person demanded the reason for so doing, when the minister being prepared for it, pointed out to him the canon of which I have spoken, requiring every communicant to inform the minister of his wish so to do, before each administration of the rite. The man, conscious that the law was against him, was obliged to submit, and in that instance there was no danger to the minister from appeal to the courts. The same minister mentioned the following fact as occurring between his own Bishop and an intemperate clergyman of the Diocese. The Bishop fearing to degrade him, on account of the difficulty and expense of proof, and defence against slander, if summoned before the courts, determined nevertheless to do what he could in the way of private admonition. He accordingly

after advising him of an intended visit on a certain day, the object of which was easily understood by the offending minister, called on him, and in a short time opened the subject. The minister immediately rang the bell for his chief servant, asking the Bishop to wait a few moments. When the servant came, his master requested him to be seated, saying, that the Bishop was about to hold a conversation with him, to which he wished him—the servant—to listen. The Bishop at once perceived that his object was to have the servant be a witness in an action of slander, which he would bring into the courts, and therefore took up his hat and left the room. Not only has this liability to be sued for acts of discipline, prevented the exercise of it in our mother Church, but such has been the influence over some in our own land, that notwithstanding the severance between Church and State, spiritual and civil courts in this country, it has been pleaded in excuse for the neglect of discipline, that there was danger even here.

Still, God has in many ways blessed our mother Church, not only in making her, what she has been called, the bulwark of the Reformation, but ever since, by raising up a great multitude of faithful Bishops and other ministers to set forth and defend, by preaching and writing, the glorious truths of the gospel, and of converting the souls of a great multitude of people, who by their lives have evinced the power of godliness. He has in a measure supplied the lack of discipline, and counteracted the evil effects of her ecclesiastical courts, by blessing other means the more abundantly. He made many things to work together for her good. The lamentations of her friends, the taunts of her enemies, the very secessions from her communion, the establishment of independent societies within the kingdom, the emulation produced thereby, all have been made to contribute something to her purity. Wesley and Whitfield and their followers, have done no little by stirring up an holy zeal

in their mother Church. The Spirit of God has raised up within the last sixty or seventy years, a host of pious ministers, who, by their zealous labors and sound doctrine, have almost redeemed her character, and removed the stigma cast upon her. The Newtons, Venns, Elliotts, Simeons, Wilsons, Gisbornes, Bickerstiths; the Wilberforces, Thorntons, Grants, Hannah Mores, and thousands like them, have produced a most blessed reformation in the manners of her communicants; and even those who are now troubling the peace of the Church by their Romanizing doctrines, have been made to contribute something to the good cause; and we cherish not only a pleasing hope, but strong confidence, that all the trials through which she is passing, and all the changes which may take place in her outward condition, will be made subservient to her true prosperity, and bring her nearer to that perfect pattern of a Church, which we find in the days of the Apostles, when, though under persecution, it was under bondage to no earthly power, so as to submit itself for laws and discipline to the authority thereof.

#### SEC. VIII.—DISCIPLINE OF OUR AMERICAN CHURCH.

In what we have said of the English Church, we have anticipated much that we should say of her daughter in America, were we only engaged in exhibiting the discipline of the latter. Her articles, her rubrics, her offices and her canons, so far as they bear on this subject, are substantially the same with those we have been considering. The homilies remain unchanged. Some of the canons bear a striking resemblance. Most of the canons of the English Church were directed against the Non-conformists. We of course have none such. Our rubrics, canons, and addresses before the communion, have the three characteristics which we have shown to belong to the Church in the times of the Apostles, to the Primitive Church and to the English Church, 1st. By our

articles on the sacraments, by our addresses before or at the communion, by our preaching from the pulpit, we state the qualifications for communing, and warn of the danger of unworthy receiving, instead of encouraging any to come with superstitious views of the ordinance.\* 2ndly. By canons, rubrics, ordination services, and the whole tenor of our Prayer Book, we expect the ministers to do much in the way of private admonition, advice and warning. 3rdly. If these fail, either to correct what is evil, or to cause the unworthy to forbear approaching the table, then as to those evil livers, some of whom are specified, who by their open and notorious transgressions, offend the congregation, they must not be suffered to come. They must, either for a specified or indefinite period, be separated from their fellowship with the Church. It may not be amiss to state some of the language used on this subject. In the rubric before the service, the open and notorious evil liver is specified as one who must not be permitted to come; being one who does not merely fall into some open act of sin through infirmity, and repents at once of the same, but who practices the same, so as to offend the congregation and injure the cause of religion. The words open and notorious are opposed to secret sins, the making public of which might do more harm, than the discipline would do good. We have seen, that in primitive times the divulging of secret sins by the

\* As another proof that our Church opposes herself to that Romish view of the sacraments which supposes them to possess in themselves some inherent virtue, or magical power, by which they operate for good on the soul, if there be no great obstacle, and that she most carefully seeks to keep the unworthy from partaking of them, we may mention that she has offices for the visitation of the sick and dying, besides other prayers for them, yet in none of them does she bid the minister urge the sick or dying to partake of the Lord's supper. In cases where private communion is allowed, the sick person must "*be desirous of it,*" and must "*send for*" the minister for that very purpose; and even then, there must be at least two others besides the minister and sick person, except in times of contagious disease, when they cannot be gotten, in order to a communion. But if "for lack of company to receive with him" or other sufficient cause he does not then receive the supper, the minister must assure him that if he has true faith, and penitence, and love in his heart, he doth partake of Christ profitably to his soul's health, though he do not receive the sacrament with his mouth.



person himself before the congregation, did much evil, and was therefore abandoned. Open and notorious, therefore, are opposed to secret and unknown. It is also forbidden that any one who has done wrong to his neighbor, by word or deed (which of course must be open and notorious), must be forbidden to come until he have made reparation, or is ready so to do. But more especially if he perceive malice and hatred to reign between two of them, he must not suffer them to partake while in this state. Both are supposed to have done some wrong in word or deed, and to have malice reigning in them. If either of them professes repentance, and readiness to make amends, he or she may be admitted, but not the one who refuses. The Church in every age, Jewish and Christian, has emphasized this point. The sin is that of murder in the sight of God. No such murderer has eternal life abiding in him. While this is the most obligatory of all ministerial acts of discipline, it is one requiring much discretion. The existence of such a state of feeling as malice or hatred, must be clearly perceived by the minister. Of course either words or deeds must exhibit it. It must also exist to such a degree as to reign in them. A hasty and injudicious attempt at reconciliation, with a threatening of repulsion from the table, whereby it would be made notorious, may do harm. The indispensable necessity of Christian love in communicants, should be frequently and emphatically presented, in speaking and preaching of this feast of love, and then it will seldom happen that any who are conscious of such a settled feeling as that mentioned in the rubric, will need to be repelled. A voluntary withdrawal will supersede that. There is also a very solemn passage in one of the addresses to be used on the Sunday or holyday preceding the sacrament, in which it is said, "Therefore if any of you be a blasphemer of God, a hinderer or slanderer of his word, an adulterer, or be in malice or envy, or any other grievous crime, repent ye of your sins,



or come not to that holy table.” We should remember who are adulterers before God, and in how many ways we may be hinderers of his word, and may cause others to blaspheme his holy name. Again, in our forty-second canon of the General Convention it is declared, that if any persons within this Church offend their brethren by any wickedness of life, such persons shall be repelled from the communion according to the rubric. The foregoing are the specifications of sins by name, as well as more general designations of evil living, which we find in our Prayer Book and the canons of the General Convention. It may perhaps be said, we do not see amongst them any express mention of those things which belong to the class of pleasurable sins, which are so often denounced in scripture, and made the subjects of discipline in the primitive Church, as well as in some of later date. We shall state what the Church has done on that subject. First. Her canon in relation to candidates for orders, who are as yet but laymen, requires that the Bishop or Ecclesiastical Authority under whose care they are, “shall see that they do not indulge in any vain or trifling conduct, or in any amusements most liable to be abused to licentiousness, or unfavorable to that seriousness, and to those pious and studious habits which become those who are preparing for the holy ministry.” As to those in the ministry, according to the 37th canon, they are liable to be tried and punished, not only for gross immorality and violation of canons, but “*frequenting places most liable to be abused to licentiousness.*” As to what such amusements and such places are, though not specified by name, few would be at a loss to determine, they being some things now existing amongst us. And if ministers and candidates for orders are required to be examples to the people, it is in order that the people should follow them, even as St. Paul calls upon the Churches to follow him, as he followed Christ, and proposed not only himself but the other Apostles, as examples

to the brethren. But there is also something more special as to those things for the direction of the laity. Instead of issuing a book of sports for the afternoons of the Sabbath, she has a canon on the due observance of the Sabbath, in which she orders that the "Lord's day (not merely a part thereof) be spent in hearing the word of God read and taught, in private and public prayer, in other exercises of devotion, and in acts of charity, using *all godly and sober conversation*." Nor is this all. In the General Convention of 1817, it was proposed to pass a canon against certain places and amusements. Opposition, however, was made to it. It was especially urged that the rubric and canons were sufficient to justify the ministers in the exercise of discipline in regard to them, and it was proposed and adopted as a substitute, that the House of Bishops be requested to express their opinion on the subjects embraced in the proposed canon. The following is an extract from their journal, which was directed to be published on the journals of the other house also:—"The House of Bishops, solicitous for the preservation of the purity of the Church, and the piety of its members, are induced to impress upon the clergy the important duty, with a discreet but earnest zeal, of warning the people of their respective cures, of the danger of an indulgence in those worldly pleasures which may tend to withdraw the affections from spiritual things. And especially on the subject of gaming, of amusements involving cruelty to the brute creation, and of theatrical entertainments, to which some peculiar circumstances have called their attention, they do not hesitate to express their unanimous opinion that these amusements, as well from their licentious tendency, as from the strong temptations to vice which they afford, ought not to be frequented." In their pastoral letter of that year they advert to the same subject, and say, "But we cannot forget that in a list of the classes of evil livers, there is introduced the description of persons

*'who are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God,'* nor in respect to the female professors of religion in particular, the admonition, that *'she who liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth.'*” I know of nothing else worth noticing on this subject in the legislation of the General Convention. It has been a uniform principle with that body, to legislate as little as possible, lest she should awaken jealousy in the Diocesan Conventions. It was established immediately after the general union of all the then American States, and by some of the very persons who formed that union, who would not have consented to the ecclesiastical union except on the same great principles which regulated the relative powers of the general and State governments, which most carefully guarded the States against the encroachments of Congress. Whatever, therefore, is not in words, or by plain and necessary inference, surrendered up by the different Dioceses to the General Convention, is retained by them. In the canons of the General Convention we see this principle recognized in various references and concessions to the Diocesan Conventions, and in those latter we find numerous instances of their action and legislation according to it. Sole and unrestricted legislation was never conceded to the General Convention. On the great points where it is allowed to legislate, the Diocesan Convention must not contradict its laws, but they may enlarge upon them and apply them as circumstances require, or legislate for themselves in the absence of general legislation. Wherefore we find that in different States the Conventions have passed laws touching both clerical and lay discipline, candidates for orders, delegates to the Convention, etc., without violating any general canons. This will not be questioned by any one who will examine and compare together our general code and the codes of the different Dioceses. This provision and allowance rests the responsibility of wholesome discipline on each Diocese, as well as on the General Convention. It

would indeed be a great evil and defect, if no one Diocese should be allowed to go in advance of another in any improvement, or of the movements of the General Convention in a practical matter of this kind, so important to the purity of the Church; more especially constituted as the General Convention now is, where each Diocese has an equal vote, though it is a fact that it takes some six or eight of the smallest to equal, in the number of ministers and communicants, one of the largest. Such a principle as this would bring our American Churches into the same sort of bondage to the General Convention, that the Dioceses of old came under to the Provincial Synods and Metropolitan Bishops, which at last ended in the supremacy of Rome. It was not so at the beginning, amongst the Apostolic Churches. It was not so in the English Church at an early period. At that time, each Bishop of a Diocese met twice a year with his Presbyters, summoning some of the laity to give information as to cases requiring discipline and attention. At these semi-annual meetings they not only enforced the laws made at the Provincial Synods, but passed others for the exercise of discipline. Our American Church had these precedents before her, as well as our civil union. See Burns' Ecclesiastical Law.

On the subject of discipline in our American Church, I have only one remark to add. Happily freed as we are from bondage to the civil government, the clergy standing in no danger or just fear of vexatious and expensive law suits, for acts of discipline performed in accordance with God's word and the rules of our Church; at full liberty, and bound to use every instrument which God has appointed to make his Church a praise to him on earth, and to prepare it for appearing before him "without spot or wrinkle or any such thing;" if we presumptuously forego the right use of discipline, and rely too much on other means, such as God has in a measure blessed under peculiar circumstances to



the English Church, in her state of bondage; if we of our own accord, lay aside any part of that "whole armour of God" which he has provided and commanded us to use, how can we claim or expect the promised blessing? By so doing we shall have broken the word of God, put asunder what he hath joined, and must be held responsible for the consequences.

#### CHURCH OF VIRGINIA.

But as my address is to the ministers of the Diocese of Virginia, I may be permitted to say something more particularly as to what has occurred among us on this subject. At an early period of my ministry, myself and a worthy lay member of the Church, who still lives to render it good service, were directed to address a letter to the two adjoining Dioceses, proposing a union for the purpose of establishing a Theological Seminary. The letter to a leading lay member of the one received no answer. That addressed to the Bishop of the other was answered in the following manner: That such was the prevalence of infidelity, and such the corruption of morals in Virginia, it would not be safe to trust an institution of this kind in her midst. Thus disappointed, we threw ourselves into the hands of God, and have found that it is better to fall into the hands of God than of man. As to the extent of the infidelity and corruption that prevailed, I shall not here speak. In a previous address to the Convention of Virginia, I made some statements on that painful subject. Suffice it to say, that at the very last of those Conventions which preceded their suspension for some years (during which the existence of the Church was almost despaired of,) that is, in the year 1805, the Convention, after lamenting in a preamble the present state of the Episcopal Church, and the want of good laws, and the non-execution of those existing, passed a number of canons, calling on both clergy and laity to unite in observ-



ing them and promoting the prosperity of the Church. Amongst them was the following: "Be it ordained that any lay member of the Church being a communicant thereof, conducting himself in a manner unworthy of a Christian, may be, and ought to be, admonished by the minister and vestry of the parish and congregation; and if such member persevere in such conduct, he shall be suspended or expelled by the minister and vestry; in which case he may appeal to the Convention, which shall have power to confirm or reject the sentence." In the year 1816, when considering the best means of reviving the Church, the same preamble and canon were adopted, only the Ordinary instead of the Convention was made the court of appeal, and at a subsequent Convention, the minister alone, according to the rubric, and not the minister and vestry, was appointed to execute the discipline; but if it was desired by either the minister or the offending communicant, the Church Wardens, if communicants, might be called on to aid in the examination of witnesses, etc. In pursuance of the same desire to purify the Church from old corruptions, and remove injurious reproaches still cast on her, in the year 1818, the following resolution was adopted in the Convention held in Winchester: "Whereas, differences of opinion prevail as to certain fashionable amusements, and it appears desirable to many that the sense of the Convention should be expressed concerning them; the Convention does hereby declare its opinion, that gaming, attending on theatres, public balls, and horse-racing, should be relinquished by all the members of this Church, as having the bad effects of staining the purity of the Christian character, of giving offence to their pious brethren, and of endangering their own salvation, by their rushing voluntarily into those temptations against which they implore the protection of their heavenly Father; and this Convention cherishes the hope, that this expression of its opinion will be sufficient to produce uniformity of opin-

ion among all the members of our communion." Doubtless some good effect resulted from this expression of opinion, but neither perfect unanimity of sentiment, nor uniformity of conduct, did take place. The opinion of the Standing Committee being asked by the Bishop as to the question, whether this resolution was designed to have the effect of law or canon; it was replied that a resolution could not of course have the force of law, but still left the decision of such matters to the minister and vestry under the rubric which directs the exercise of discipline on open and notorious evil livers. 'The Committee, however, though disclaiming all right to expound the rubric, leaving that to each minister and vestry,\* do not hesitate to condemn all these things mentioned in the resolution as altogether improper in communicants. The whole responsibility of deciding the applicability of general terms to practices about which there has been some dispute, for which the more worldly minded and pleasure-loving, in all ages, have pleaded, being cast on the ministers, they could only measure the same by such scriptures as seem to condemn them, by the canons of the Church in different ages, and the general sentiment of the more pious concerning them. It has, therefore, appeared desirable in order to remove all doubt, and to prevent the charge of undue assumption of authority in doubtful cases, to follow the example of all civil and religious bodies, and render clear by canon, in as many instances as seemed to require it, what without canon might be thought to be doubtful, and therefore subject the minister to needless censure if exercising discipline, or else tempt him to the neglect thereof. For this reason, and because of a mortifying increase in the number of professing Christians in our own diocese, who have, to the injury of religion, yielded to the temptation of sinful pleasures,

\* This was a mistake in the committee. The vestry had been left out at the preceding Convention; the whole responsibility rested on the ministers.

notwithstanding the faithful preaching and affectionate admonition of their ministers, the warnings of the Bishops, and repeated remonstrances of the Convention, it has been proposed to forbid by canon some of those things not specified by name in the rubrics or canons of the General Convention. At the revision of the laws, in the Convention at Norfolk, in the year 1848, the following canon was passed with great unanimity, no one indeed voting against it, though some few doubting its necessity or expediency. As its ratification must take place at another Convention, it was accordingly proposed with the rest of the revised code at the Convention of 1849, but postponed until the Convention of 1850.\* The canon is in these words: "Any member of the Church being a communicant thereof, conducting himself or herself in a manner unworthy of a Christian, ought to be admonished, or repelled from the Lord's table by the minister of the parish or Church, according to the rubric; and gaming, attendance on horse racing, and theatrical amusements, witnessing immodest and licentious exhibitions and shows, attending public balls, habitual neglect of public worship, or a denial of the doctrines of the gospel as generally set forth in the authorized standards of the Church, are offences for which discipline should be exercised. This, however, shall not be construed to include all the subjects of discipline in the Church." It will be per-

\* This canon was not only considered, but a vote taken, when it was found that forty-two of the clergy were in favor of it, and twelve against it, while twenty-two of the laity were against it, and nineteen in favor of it. A number, nearly all, we are informed, of those who voted against it declared, either publicly or privately, that their reason for so doing was, that they thought the rubrics and canons of the Church already sufficient to justify the minister in proceeding against offences such as those specified in the proposed canon, and that they ought so to do. As, however, they saw that their vote would probably be misunderstood, and they be charged with advocating such things, some of them expressed a wish for its re-consideration, that they might change their vote and leave no doubt of their entire opposition to all such practices. This, however, could not, with propriety, be done, as some of the members had left the Convention. It was thought sufficient to re-consider and postpone the final action until the next Convention, when, it is hoped, there will be little or no difference of opinion.

ceived that we have here a general expression as to conduct “unworthy of a Christian,” then a specification of certain offences, but with a declaration that this does not include all unworthiness, to meet an objection raised, that what was omitted in the specification was thereby licensed. The things specified are nearly all of them of a peculiar class, and such as had once brought, or do now bring, reproach on the Church. Gaming and horse-racing are sinful amusements, once to the shame of the Church practiced, and frequented by some of her clergy and laity, and though now abandoned by all her clergy, and it is to be hoped by all her laity, (though this was not the case at the time of the resolution at the Convention of 1832), it has been thought best to place them on the list of forbidden things, so that if the prohibition thereof be not necessary to prevent their return and to justify discipline, it may stand as the decision of the Church as a part of her history and a help to those who are to come. As to other places and amusements which we think sinful, there is a general complaint of all denominations of Christians in our land of an increased need of adopting the most effectual means for rescuing their members from the snares there laid for them, and into which too many are disposed to rush. In thus acting, the Convention will be sustained by the opinions and practice of the best of God’s people in every age, whether Jewish or Christian.\*

\* As it is gratifying to perceive the evidences of genuine piety among the first Christians, notwithstanding doctrinal errors and practical corruptions growing out of their connection with Jews and Gentiles, so is it pleasing to see the proofs that God always had enough of the faithful among his ancient people, the Jews, to exhibit the superior purity of their religion to that of the nations around. The Abbey Fleury, in his history of the Ancient Israelites, says, they had no profane shows among them; and as to games of chance, they were entirely ignorant of them, for we do not find the name of such things as the latter in scripture. As to hunting, though we read of nets and snares in scripture, yet he says there is no account of dogs being raised and kept for the chase as in modern days, such hunting belonging to the vast forests and untilled lands of cold countries. The testimony of Josephus is also very satisfactory. In his history and defence of the Jewish nation, he justifies their avoidance of intercourse with foreigners, by the example of



## SECTION IX.—CONCLUDING REMARKS.

Having thus briefly surveyed the history of our subject as set forth in God's word, in the early Christian Church, in our mother Church, and in our own, we conclude with a few remarks by way of application.

1st. Although we have quoted freely from the Fathers and Reformers, and made use of their testimonies and example in order to enforce our own views of what is right and expedient, and of course hold them in high esteem in many things, we by no means bind ourselves to a blind and implicit compliance with all, either of their opinions or practices on the subject we are considering. With the word of God for our guide as to general principles, if, in humble dependence on divine direction, we faithfully endeavor to find out what is suited to our own age and country, and the altered circumstances of the Church, we may certainly hope to regulate this part of its discipline, so as to effect the great end in view.\*

the Athenians and Lacedemonians in their earlier and purer days, when they feared the contamination of intimacy with older and more corrupt nations, and forbade much association with them. Speaking of the manners of the heathen, he says: "Our law does not permit us to make festivals at the birth of our children, and thereby afford occasion of drinking to excess; but it ordains that the very beginning of our education should be immediately directed to sobriety." Again, "Our laws take care of righteousness, they banish idleness and expensive living, instruct men to be content with what they have, and be laborious in their callings; courageous in defending laws; inexorable in punishing malefactors." His account of the first introduction of heathenish amusements among them is quite affecting. No public exhibitions of the kind were ever known among them, until after the death of Alexander the Great, when some apostate Jews obtained leave of Antiochus to build as gymnasium at Jerusalem, as they "wished to follow the Grecian way of living." After that, the wicked Herod, abandoning the laws and customs of his fathers, built a theatre in the city, and a large amphitheatre in the plain, to exhibit such shows as Josephus says "had never been delivered down to them as fit to be used." He spared no pains and expense to make them as entertaining as possible, by getting performers from all parts of the world. "To native Jews," says Josephus, "this was no better than a dissolution of those customs for which they had so great a veneration." Most violent was the opposition made to the representations of the theatre, and Herod had need of all his skill to prevent some great outbreak of the people. As it was, his life was assailed by some, who died, declaring their readiness thus to suffer in defence of their ancient customs.

\* In one thing all Churches, all religions, all governments agree, and that is, in the propriety of a code of laws as specific as circumstances require, neither leaving every man



2ndly. Although our attention has been mainly given to discipline in its bearing on the laity and on a certain class of offences, we have not neglected to speak of canons touching the clergy and other kinds of sin, even those confessed by all to be worthy of discipline. As to these latter, if any minister, through cowardice or false tenderness, shall permit them to go unpunished, let him remember what St. Paul said and did concerning the guilty person at Corinth, and what may be expected from neglecting to punish notorious and great evil doers. As to the discipline of the clergy, let the laity remember that they unite with equal legislative powers in establishing it. The canons thus made subject all ministers and candidates for orders to punishment for the same offences which render laymen liable, only that the punishment is more severe, for where the laity are only deprived of communion, the clergy are deprived of orders. As to unseemly diversions, and improper places and things most liable to be abused, they are most expressly interdicted to the clergy. The laity who unite in such prohibition, should surely include themselves in the same, and not even seem to advocate a different standard of religion for each order, as they hope to inhabit the same heaven. As to matters of doctrine (in regard to which the Church in times past has ever had chief reference to the clergy, sometimes indeed with an intolerant spirit, seeking to enforce a too exact uniformity, and relying unduly on the arm of authority, and too little on argument and an appeal to God's word,) I trust that the American Church will be guided in the path of duty by the wisdom which is from above. As we allow

to do what seems right in his own eyes, nor some man or men to rule arbitrarily according to their own judgment and will, neither relying on moral suasion and philosophy. Men will ever be disposed to make free use of the principle, "where there is no law, there is no transgression," and interpret its silence into sanction and consent. Cicero's remark concerning the brief Roman code, is most just:—"I will boldly declare my opinion, though the whole world be offended at it. I prefer this little book of the twelve tables alone, to all the volumes of the philosophers. I find it to be of more weight and much more useful."—*De Oratore*.

those of the laity whose hearts fail them as to their religious profession, or who may prefer some other communion, to withdraw themselves without any public and disgraceful anathema, so is a door open for the withdrawal of ministers, who may find that they have mistaken their calling, or prefer some other ministry or communion. We should be sorry to see either of these doors closed, since we regard them as wise and charitable provisions, though liable to be abused. But while we would kindly open them for the conscientious, we would not throw them wide open, and keep them ever so for those, whether clergy or laity, who might choose to remain during their own pleasure, doing mischief by teaching and example, until they can do no more, and then find it convenient to escape.\*

3rdly. It may be and has been often said, is not the Church exceeding the limits of that authority which was given her by the Divine Head in prescribing such terms of communion, or giving such power to her ministers, as some

\* The following facts in relation to General Washington are mentioned, in order to enforce the view we have taken of the duty of one who feels that he has either with insufficient views united with Christians in the Lord's supper, or else has afterwards been drawn away by too much intercourse with the world, from that seriousness and religious sensibility required for a worthy participation. There is good reason to believe, that General Washington was in early life not only an active vestryman of the Church, but a communicant—that he did commune and give other evidences of a religious character during the war, but I state it on the authority of Bishop White, that while living in Philadelphia as President of the United States, he did not commune, but withdrew with the rest of the congregation. After some time, however, he abstained from Church on communion days, though punctual on all other days, which the Bishop ascribed to a remark of one of the ministers in a sermon, as to the evil example of turning our backs on the table of the Lord. He supposed that General Washington thought it would seem more respectful in him, and be less injurious in the way of example to others not to come, than to leave the house in that manner. It may be that the many engagements of public life, and all the worldly scenes through which he passed, had engrossed his mind, and shut out much of that interest in religion which had once dwelt within his breast, and that he conscientiously withdrew. Although it is much to be lamented that the Statesman did not wait as humbly and faithfully on God as did the General, yet his conduct was far better than that of many in high places who have continued their religious profession, while their conversation and conduct were at utter variance with its requirements. Whether Washington returned to that full profession after his retirement to private life, I am unable to say. He certainly was an attendant at Church—a vestryman of it—and a liberal contributor to the same.

would advocate? Does she not demand more than the great Master himself would do in order to a seat at his table? If any one is conscious of faith in Christ and repentance towards God, and professes the same, and asks for the communion, who shall refuse him, seeing that such are declared to be the great conditions of salvation. To this we reply, that if a communicant of the Church has a right to demand continuance in it and exemption from discipline, because professing to have the principles of faith and penitence within him, though violating some of her rules, then has a candidate for adult baptism, confirmation and the first participation of the supper, a right to demand the same, and refuse to comply with any other terms, saying that Christ and the Apostles demanded no others. What then is to be done in the case of one thus demanding baptism? The Church has commanded the minister not only to be careful in the previous examination, that the person come worthily, but has prescribed a service in which it is required of the candidate, not merely to say that he has faith and repentance in his heart, but that he renounces the devil and all his works, the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, and all the sinful lusts of the flesh, and believes all the articles of the Christian faith, and will keep all of God's commandments; which expressions comprehend many things, according to general consent, which some do not think are necessarily included in the terms faith and repentance. Must the minister change the service and baptize him on the general profession of faith and repentance? No one will maintain this. This penitent believer then must be refused by the Church, because he will not submit to other terms than God imposes, that is, according to the reasoning of some. Let us, however, be sure that we do not mistake as to the terms which God actually imposes. God does not merely use the general terms, believe and repent, in setting forth the terms of admission to his Church on earth or in heaven,

but enlarges on them, and explains them by various other scriptures, stating what things must be renounced in order to a true repentance, what things must be done in order to shew our faith; requires us to bring forth the fruits of faith and repentance. What are all the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, but enlargements and explanations of the moral law and of faith and repentance? So it is with the Church in her baptismal vows, rubrics and canons. In all of these she sets forth her views of repentance, faith and obedience, and those who would come to her communion, must comply with the same. Otherwise, if every one is to be his own judge, nothing but confusion would ensue. The more conscientious and pious, if drawn into some sin and not justifying it, might be punished, while the more unscrupulous and irreligious, by declaring that they did not admit the same to be sin, or contrary to their professed faith or repentance, might be allowed to live as they pleased. The Church ought indeed to see that she does not go beyond scripture in her demands, but be conformed either to the letter or the spirit thereof. We have already seen how many scriptures speak of and condemn such things as are evidently alluded to in the baptismal renunciation.

4thly. It may now perhaps be asked in relation to many things denounced with more or less precision in scripture, and by the early Church, as sinful, is not the world with which we have to do, so changed and improved by the influence of our holy religion, that such things either do not exist, or are so modified in their character, though still called by the same or similar names, as to have lost so much of evil or imbibed so much of good, that they no longer deserve to be anathematized, and of course that discipline in relation to them is no more needed? This is an important point, on the settlement of which very much of practical religion depends. We have seen that though Christianity effected much good in the first ages, sustained as it was by



the mighty power of God and the purifying influence of persecution, yet there was much corruption in many of its professors, requiring discipline. The tones of piety and the manners of Christians varied very much, at different times and in different places, according to Ecclesiastical History, beginning with the accounts of the seven Churches in the Apocalypse, sometimes calling for commendation, at others for rebuke. The question is as to its condition in our times. We should be sorry to think with some, that we live in the most degenerate days. We believe that in many respects Christianity is now in a better condition, in the larger part of Protestant Christendom, than at any previous period. We rejoice to think that many things have either passed away, or been greatly changed for the better, which in different ages dishonored mankind and the Christian Church; and yet there may be so much evil left, that godly discipline is required to be faithfully exercised. Let it be remembered by us, that substantially the same baptismal forms of renouncing the devil and all his works, the pomps and vanities of the world, and sinful lusts of the flesh, have come down to us from the early ages; nor has it at any time been proposed to alter them, they always seeming to be suitable and needed, there being many things among Christians, even to this day, answering to those renounced at the baptism of the first Christians. What, though some things from time to time passed away, or changed names, or lost something of their grossness, others of the same kind took their place, though more refined, so that the evil and temptation were substantially the same; and the very arguments used against them by the better sort of Pagans and the Fathers, have been reiterated in every age by the pious and sober minded. Who is there that would dare to propose a change in the baptismal vows, or to put his name to an exposition of them, departing from those which have been set forth in every age; and yet how strange, how unmeaning and per-



verted would be an exposition accommodating the same to the wishes, opinions and practices of many professing Christians in regard to themselves and children. Some parents there are too honest to go through a form which is in direct contradiction to their own lives, and to the manner in which they propose to bring up their children, and therefore prefer to leave them unbaptized, rather than offer them to God with a lie on their lips.\* But there are those who, either from perfect indifference or from false views of religion, do not understand it aright, and do not make the answer of a good conscience towards God in those words. We are disputing much and earnestly, and not without cause, as to the meaning of other parts of the baptismal service, but let us be on our guard, lest while disputing about the doctrine of the baptismal regeneration of our infants (a thing necessarily hidden from our view and which God has not revealed), we permit the devil to put his interpretation on a far more important part of the service, if St. Peter is to be believed, who says, that the baptism which saves, is "the answer of a good conscience towards God." But there is something else of far higher authority than the baptismal renunciation

\* Dr. Thomas Brey, in his exposition of our Church Catechism, says: "That which approaches nearest in these, our days, to those sort of heathenish pomps, and which in pompousness and magnificence of scene, are not much inferior to them, are their profane and lewd plays acted in our public play-houses, where, for ought I know, more souls are murdered than in the former were bodies; more profaneness, and more lewd assignations made than at the pagan theatres; and how infinitely unfit it is, that those kinds of diversions should be permitted in a Christian State, or that persons, professing Christianity, should be permitted to go near them.

"It can be demonstrated that the stage can never cease to be a school of vice; for were nothing exhibited thereon that is congenial to the corrupt inclinations of the depraved heart of man, it would attract no spectator and could not be supported. If an attendance on the amusements of the theatre be not an implicit and positive breach of the baptismal covenant, it will be difficult to prove that it can be broken at all."

Dr. Brey who thus speaks, was, Mr. Biddulph informs us, neither a Puritan nor a Methodist, but a staunch member of the Church of England.

Bishop White, in his lectures on the Church Catechism, says: "That after the stage was purged of idolatry by Christian Emperors, still lewdness continued, and therefore the baptismal vow was continued; and that even if that had been banished from the stage, there would have been always some things of the kind in the world to require such a vow and promise."

which has come down to us unchanged, and will continue to the end of the world the very same in letter and in spirit. The warnings of God's word, against the devil, the world and the flesh, against evil communication, against the seductions of pleasure, are for us as for the first disciples. If not, if they were only designed for the first disciples, and to warn them against existing evils which have now passed away, how large a portion of scripture would be to us a dead letter, of no practical use whatever. But let us remember that as we must not add to, we must not take from, that holy volume. That the same scriptures and the same baptismal vows are suitable for men in every age, is readily accounted for. Human nature is the same in every age, and is born into the same world of sin and temptation. In its unsanctified state, it delights in the indulgence of the same lusts, which call for the same gratifications. Even in its sanctified state, there is a remainder of sin ever ready to return to such things. The devil is the same unchanged being that he was at the first; still bent upon the injury of our race, as when he tempted our first parents to gratify appetite, curiosity and ambition, saying, "ye shall not surely die, but shall be as gods." His children are the same now as ever, sons of Belial and daughters of pleasure, tempting even the sons of God. He uses fullness of bread and abundance of idleness as means of corruption still, and destroys as many souls as ever in the snares of pleasure. The children of God have the same conflict as ever, and the kingdom of heaven still suffereth violence, and cannot be taken but by force. The Canaanites are still in the land. The heathen in heart are still all around us, and we must come out from among them, as we hope to be the sons and daughters of God. The same heaven is to be won; the same hell to be escaped. If from these general remarks we descend to particulars, we shall find a closer resemblance than some might imagine between the pleasurable vices of the former and latter days, as

well as all other sins. Games of chance, for instance, are the same absorbing, time wasting and soul destroying things now that they were in the first days of the Church, and among the heathen. If gladiatorial combats were discontinued, other combats took their place, in different parts of Christendom, and have not been actually abandoned to this day. If the shows of wild beasts and their deadly combats with each other and with men passed away, combats between domestic animals have been carried on to the destruction of thousands, and have been attended in many parts of Christendom by thousands of baptized Christians, sometimes even on the Sabbath. As to the theatre, are not sentiments continually there uttered, and in the most imposing manner, just as contrary to our religion and offensive to God, and pernicious to morals, as any idolatrous ones in those of old? Is there not indelicacy and lewdness in the dress and action of performers now as of old, and are not actors and actresses excluded now as of old, not only from the communion, but from respectable society? Are not the theatres the very places where the most abandoned of the female sex come to use all their arts for the seduction of the other, and where thousands of the other sex rush into the snare? Is it not shocking to think that our sisters and daughters are sitting beneath the same roof with these wretched beings, delighted with the same exhibition, applauding the same false sentiments, and even amused at the same indecent and licentious jests, or gestures, from persons perhaps of the same character? And as to dancing, can there have been anything in ancient times more immodest than the half-dressed female performers on the stage, who attract so many to behold the shameful exposure of their persons, while engaged in an unnatural use of their limbs? Would any persons in such a garb be admitted into respectable houses? Would not the very boys follow and hiss at such along the streets, if any attempted to walk them in such an undress? But is this all? Do not

some who go to admire such actresses, return to imitate them, so far as will be tolerated? Is it not a matter of complaint, regret and shame, not merely with pious Christians, but with many of the purer minded of this world, that dances are introduced utterly inconsistent with that shamefacedness and modesty which the Apostle recommends; in which there is an indelicate familiarity between the sexes which would not be allowed on other occasions? Again, is it asked whether there be anything in modern times which may be compared with the pictures of ancient days. We ask if there has not been a growing disposition to exhibit in a condition altogether different from that in which God himself put our first parents, when with his own hands he made them garments for a covering, the pictures and statues of human beings, to be objects of admiration to the youth of both sexes, sometimes standing side by side, and even arm in arm? Nay, more, have there not been for the last few years, naked human beings, selected for their fine forms, carried about to be exhibited in every varied attitude, and though the corporations of some cities, to their praise, closed their gates against them, others gave them full liberty for display, to the thousands who flocked to the shameful spectacle.\*

It must be acknowledged that the public mind and taste are becoming more and more familiarized with such things. Indecent gestures, and smutty inuendoes and libertine sentiments in the theatre, receive nothing but a mild rebuke

\* In another instance, also, may we trace a resemblance between modern and ancient times. The Apostle Paul, in his 1st Epistle to Timothy, enjoins it on "women professing godliness" "to adorn themselves with modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety, not with broidered hair, etc." Some of the early canons also forbid certain decorations of the person, "whereby to ensnare the beholders." It has ever been supposed that the attire of female performers at the theatres and other places was here alluded to, and that Christians were forbidden to imitate their unbecoming fashions. And is it not a fact, undisputed, that the theatres of Paris and London have, at some times, had no little to do with setting the fashions for the ladies of Europe and America, and that some of their fashions have been wanting in shamefacedness, sobriety and modesty, as enjoined by the Apostle?



from the gentlemen as being contrary to good taste, and are resented by the ladies, only by the uplifted fan or handkerchief. All kinds of exhibitions, indeed, which are transported from place to place, must now have something to gratify the corrupt tastes of the people, in order to ensure their support.\* It should have great weight in determining the judgment and regulating the conduct of Christians as to all such things, to know that in all ages there have been numbers not enrolling themselves with communicants, and some even doubting the truth of our holy religion, who, on principles of mere morality, have condemned them. What a testimony does the Emperor Julian furnish! Wishing to adopt the most effectual means for supplanting Christianity and establishing Paganism, he presented the ministers and members of the Christian Church as models to his priests and people, positively forbidding the former to have any thing to do with the public amusements of that day, and saying that it was by the holy lives of Christians and their abstaining from such things, that their religion had made such progress, and that Paganism could only regain what it had lost in the same way. This of itself proves that, though many professing Christians had been false to their profession, many had been faithful to it; enough to force this commendation from an enemy. Let me also, in this connection, refer you to a memorable document to be found on the records of the American Congress, in those times which tried the souls of men, and when the heroes of the Revolution looked up to an Almighty arm for aid in that fearful contest of our country with the greatest nation upon earth. Remembering that we must renounce all things offensive to heaven, if we hope to secure its favor, they

\* A young member of the Church not long since informed me, that he was induced, for the first time, to attend a circus, being led thither by the example of other professors, and among the first things he heard was blasphemy from the clown, who came forth calling himself "The great I am."



call upon all the States to take the most effectual measures for the encouragement of *religion and good morals*, and particularly specify "*suppressing of theatrical entertainments, horse-racing, gaming, and such other diversions as are productive of idleness, dissipation and a general depravity of manners.*" This testimony should have the greatest weight with us, because it has been ascertained that some of those who voted for it were not members of any denomination of Christians, and it appears that it was carried by a vote of nearly three-fourths of those present.

#### ADDRESS TO THE LAITY.

And now having adduced many facts and arguments on the subject of Ecclesiastical Law and Discipline, I draw to a close by a few solemn and affectionate words to our dear friends of the laity, urging them to such a course of conduct as may entirely supersede the exercise of it even in its first and mildest form of admonition.

1st. To those of you who are more disposed to stretch your Christian liberty to the utmost bounds, who, from a love of pleasure, are disposed to indulge yourselves in things which you wish to consider lawful, because not positively by name forbidden, let me say, examine faithfully not only into your desires, motives, objects, &c., in seeking their gratification, but into the effects of the same. In the contest between the old and the new man within you (if indeed there be such a contest), on which side do these things fight? Is the law of sin in your members, or the law of holiness in your souls strengthened thereby? Are you living to the flesh or to the spirit, knowing that to be carnally minded is death, to be spiritually minded, life and peace? Thus living, can you say, "The life I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God?" Knowing that "whatsoever is not of faith is sin." "Are you doing all these things heartily as to the Lord?" Are you not hindered in run-

ning the race before you by such things, and can you be hindered yourselves without being hinderers of others also? Be faithful to yourselves in this examination, and remember how much better it is to err on the one side than on the other—to relinquish lawful things rather than run the risk of doing unlawful ones. The exercise of self-denial is called for in regard to lawful as well as unlawful things, when good can be done and evil prevented. St. Paul was thoroughly persuaded that certain things were lawful, and would not surrender his judgment as to them to any one, and yet as to practice, he would not eat meat or drink wine while the world lasted, if thus he should offend or tempt even a weaker brother. After his example it is our duty to avoid not only evil, but the appearance of it, having respect to things which “are of good report” among those who are without as well of those within.\*

2dly. To those of you who feel no disposition, and are under no temptation to forbidden indulgences, let me speak a word, asking your co-operation with God’s ministers in this duty. By a consistent and decided course, you may do much towards strengthening their hands, and encouraging the more irresolute and less faithful of professors to walk uprightly. It is not enough that you abstain yourselves from evil or doubtful things, you must not suffer sin in a brother if you can help it. A cowardly silence or doubtful condemnation, a ready acquiescence or countenance afforded

\* Archbishop Leighton, in his admirable Commentary on the first Epistle of Peter, when he comes to the 2d and 3d verses, about renouncing our lusts, revellings, banquetings, &c., and henceforth living to the will of God and rejoicing in that, he says: “Half reformations in a Christian turn to his prejudice. It is only best to be reformed throughout, and to give up with all idols; not to live one-half to himself and to the world, and as it were another half to God, *for that is but falsely so, and in reality cannot be.* The only way is, to make a heap of all, to have all sacrificed together, and live to no lust, but altogether and only to God. Thus it must be; there is no monster in the new creation—no half new creature—either all, or not at all. God will have nothing, unless he have the heart, and none of that neither, unless he have all. Royalty can admit of no rivalry. And if he be thy husband, thou must renounce all others. The title of a husband is as strict and tender as that of a king.”

by your presence, or in any other way, will weaken the hands of your ministers and encourage the lukewarm, the worldly minded and the timorous, to live so as to bring reproach on their profession. Not only this, but you must be examples to them of active zeal in all good works. To abstain from evil is only a part of religion. We must cease to do evil and learn to do well. We must not only carefully avoid all evil communication with the world, in these ungodly amusements and works, but have fellowship with the saints in all those good works which God hath prepared for them to walk in, and which make them his "peculiar people."

3rdly. One word to Parents. I have more than once already said, that you were the divinely appointed aids to ministers in this duty. If you be faithful in preparing your children for confirmation, according to the word of God and the baptismal vows, and do not wish or consent that they shall be presented to the Bishop until they have experienced a death unto sin and a new birth unto righteousness, until the love of God has displaced the love of the world in their hearts, the ministers will seldom have trouble afterwards. But it is often otherwise with parents. On conversing with a young candidate for confirmation once, in the presence of her mother, the latter told me she had only one fault to find with her daughter, viz: that she could not persuade her to go enough into the world, to enjoy herself with other young people. I was also once seriously asked by a mother, who seemed to have some earnest desires for her children's welfare in both worlds, if I would not prepare a sermon, defining as accurately as possible the boundaries between the world and religion. She asked it particularly in reference to her children. She wished them to inherit the kingdom of heaven when they died, but would not have them to lose anything of this world's pleasure while here, which with any tolerable safety could be enjoyed. She evidently wished

to take them as near the very edge of the precipice as she could, without great danger of their being precipitated into the gulf below. Such a case as that, of course I could not undertake. Rather let me urge all parents who may read these pages, as they love their children, to remember that God is a jealous God, and will not dwell in a divided heart. Let them rather seek and covet of the Lord for their children, the largest foretaste of heaven, and thus make them less anxious for the vanities of earth, whether they be riches, honors, or pleasures.

And now, dear brethren and friends, one and all, think not that I am disposed to undue severity, or that I would do you the wrong of holding you up as great transgressors in the matters referred to. God is my witness, that I love you too much for this. I have served you too long; known you too well, am too proud of you in many things, and even boast of you too much, to do you any injustice. I have ever said, that as a body you would fall behind none other in our own or other Churches, for intelligent and consistent piety, for kindness and hospitality, for liberality and zeal. Nay, in my inward rejoicings I have sometimes gone beyond this. So much personal kindness do I receive, and so much happiness do I enjoy, notwithstanding much bodily infirmity, in my protracted visitations, that I feel as though I should be tempted to continue them after they shall have ceased to be profitable, if that be not so already. This, my affection for you and delight in you, is the reason why I am jealous over you with such a godly jealousy. I know what has ever been the besetting sin of the members of our own and mother Church, and wish to guard you against it. Great has been the reformation of both from former times, but there is a present tendency to return to the same. Comparatively few as yet have erred in the ways referred to, but it is an increasing number, and circumstances favor a yet greater increase, unless some check be imposed. If any



say, the number of transgressors is not great enough to require more rigorous action, we reply, that in the primitive Church it was always considered and urged as a reason for pressing discipline, that but few transgressed, for if it was then neglected, it would soon be impracticable, and nothing would be heard but fruitless lamentations, and unheeded warnings. The history of the early Churches bears abundant testimony to this. St. Paul did not wait for members to sin greatly, but exercised godly discipline as soon as it was needed, that others might fear to offend. Still it may seem to some of you that I am weak, that it becomes not the dignity of the Episcopal Office to be dwelling on such things. The Episcopal Office may be comparatively useless by reason of, and the Church itself die of such dignity. At any rate, permit us to say with the Apostle, "For we are glad when we are weak, and ye are strong, but this also we wish, even *your perfection*." We are willing to be one of the weak things and foolish things, if God will only use us for some good purpose in your behalf. Nay, we ought not only to be willing, but rejoice to be weak and foolish with Solomon, and the Prophets, and Apostles, and Fathers, and Reformers, who ever warned men against despising what seemed to some of the wise and mighty of this world, as little things, but which they knew were by little and little sinking immortal souls down into the gulf of perdition. We wish to leave behind us our full testimony as to the evil tendency of those things, whose character and effects we have now been witnessing during a ministry of nearly forty years. When dead, or our voice can be heard no more among you, we wish to speak by this record. Such is our interest in your welfare, that we feel as if death itself shall not altogether sunder the tie that binds us together, but that we may still continue to care for you, and perhaps have some knowledge of your affairs.

And to you, my dear brethren of the clergy, who I well



know deeply sympathize in all that I have said, who often ask for counsel and help in these things from your Bishops, if I shall have furnished you the least light and strength in the path of duty by what I have written, I shall be amply repaid for all the time, thought, study and prayer which I have bestowed upon it. I commend it and you, and your dear people, to Him who alone is able to give *it* any power, or *you* any success, or to present *them* faultless and without reproach to himself in the great day.

Yours in the Lord.

W. MEADE.

## DR. JOHNSON'S OPINION

OF BISHOP COLLIER, THE AUTHOR OF THE BOOK FROM WHICH THE FOLLOWING EXTRACTS ARE TAKEN.

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“Being a fierce and implacable non-juror, he knew that an attack on the theatre would never make him suspected for a Puritan; he therefore published a short view of the immorality and profaneness of the English stage, I believe, with no other motive than religious zeal and honest indignation. His onset was violent. Those passages which, while they stood single, had passed with little notice, when they were accumulated and exposed together, excited horror. The wise and the pious caught the alarm, and the nation wondered why it had suffered irreligion and licentiousness to be openly taught at the public charge.”—LIFE OF CONGREVE.

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## APPENDIX.

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EXTRACTS FROM THE CELEBRATED WORK OF JEREMY COLLIER, ON THE  
ENGLISH STAGE, PUBLISHED IN THE YEAR 1698.

The following testimonies are well calculated to enforce what has been previously said on theatrical representations. I ask a careful reading and candid estimate of them. In the first part of the work, the Author examines the English plays very critically, and exposes the false sentiments, improper language, and vicious characters set forth in them, comparing them with the celebrated plays of Greece and Rome, and showing how, in many things, the latter were better friends of virtue and religion. In the sixth and last chapter, from whence the following extracts are taken, he gives you the opinion of the best of the heathen concerning the stage, as it existed among them, the sense of the primitive Church on the stage as it then was, and some testimonies as to the English stage. From these extracts three things will plainly appear:—1st. That the same reigning errors belong to the stage in all ages; that it can only be sustained by humoring certain follies, exciting certain passions, and ministering to certain corrupt propensities of our nature. 2ndly. That some professing christians wished to frequent theatres and public shows in those days, as well as now, and used the same arguments in favor of the indulgence. 3rdly. That faithful ministers opposed them by the same arguments now used, and the pious of those days abstained from them for the same reasons which influence such as condemn and avoid them now.

The sixth and last chapter thus begins:—Having in the foregoing Chapters discovered some part of the Disorders of the English stage; I shall in this last, present the reader with a short view of the sense of antiquity, to which I shall add some modern authorities; from all which it will appear, that plays have generally been looked on as the nurseries of vice, the corrupters of truth, and the grievance of the country where they are suffered.

This proof from testimony shall be ranged under these three heads:—

Under the first, I shall cite some of the most celebrated heathen Philosophers, Orators and Historians, men of the biggest consideration, for sense, learning and figure.

The Second shall consist of the laws and constitutions of Princes, &c.

The Third will be drawn from church records, from Fathers, and councils of unexceptionable authority.

### DIVISION 1st.

1st. I shall produce some of the most celebrated Heathen Philosophers. To begin with Plato. This Philosopher tells us “that plays raise the passions, and pervert the use of them, and by consequence are

dangerous to morality. For this reason, he banishes these diversions his commonwealth."

Xenophon, who was both a man of letters and a great general, commends the Persians for the discipline of their education. 'They won't (says he) so much as suffer their youth to hear anything that's amorous or tawdry.' They were afraid, want of ballast might make them miscarry, and that 'twas dangerous to add weight to the bias of nature.

Aristotle lays it down for a rule, 'that the law ought to forbid young people the seeing comedies. Such permissions not being safe, till age and discipline had confirmed them in sobriety, fortified their virtue, and made them as it were proof against debauchery.' This Philosopher, who had looked as far into human nature as any man, observes farther: 'That the force of music and action is very affecting. It commands the audience and changes the passions to a resemblance of the matter before them. So that where the representation is foul, the thoughts of the company must suffer.'

Tully cries out upon 'licentious plays and poems, as the bane of sobriety and wise thinking. That comedy subsists upon lewdness, and that pleasure is the Root of all evil.'

Livy reports the original of plays among the Romans. 'He tells us they were brought in upon the score of religion, to pacify the Gods, and remove a mortality. But then he adds that the motives are sometimes good, when the means are stark naught. That the remedy in this case was worse than the disease, and the atonement more infectious than the plague.

Valerius Maximus, contemporary with Livy, gives much the same account of the rise of Theatres at Rome. 'Twas devotion which built them. And as for the performances of those places, which Mr. Dryden calls the ornaments, this author censures, as the Blemishes of peace. And which is more, He affirms, 'They were the occasions of civil distractions; And that the State first blushed, and then bled for the entertainment. He concludes the consequences of plays to be intolerable. And that Massilienses did well in clearing the country of them. Seneca complains heartily of the extravagance and debauchery of the age; And how forward people were to improve in that which was naught. That scarce any one would apply themselves to the study of nature and morality, unless when the Play-House was shut, or the weather foul. That there was no body to teach Philosophy, because there was no body to learn it. But that the Stage had nurseries, and company enough. This misapplication of time and fancy, made knowledge in so low a condition. This was the cause the hints of antiquity were no better pursued, that some inventions were sunk, and that human reason grew downwards, rather than otherwise. And elsewhere he avers, that there is nothing more destructive to good manners than to run idling to see sights. For there vice makes an insensible approach, and steals upon us in the disguise of pleasure.'

Tacitus, relating how Nero hired decayed gentlemen for the Stage, complains of the mismanagement, and lets us know 'twas the part of a Prince to relieve their necessity, and not to tempt it. And that his bounty should rather have set them above an ill practice, than driven them upon it.

And in another place, he informs us that 'the German women were guarded against danger, and kept their honour out of harm's way, by having no Play Houses among them.'

Plays, in the opinion of the judicious Plutarch, are dangerous to corrupt young people, and therefore Stage Poetry, when it grows too hardy and licentious, ought to be checked. This was the opinion of these celebrated authors with respect to Theatres. They charge them with the corruption of principles and manners, and lay in all imaginable caution against them. And yet these men had seldom anything but this world in their scheme, and formed their judgments only upon natural light and common experience. We see then to what sort of conduct we are obliged. The case is plain, unless we are little enough to renounce our Reason, and fall short of Philosophy, and live *under* the pitch of Heathenism.

#### DIVISION 2ND.

I shall now, in the second place, proceed to the *censures* of the State; and show in a few words how much the Stage stands discouraged by the Laws of other countries and our own.

To begin with the Athenians. This people, though none of the worst friends to the Play-House, 'thought a comedy so unrespectable a Performance, that they made a law that no Judge of the Areopagus should make one.'

I come next to the Lacedemonians, who were remarkable for the wisdom of their laws, the sobriety of their manners, and their breeding of brave men. This government would not endure the Stage in any form, nor under any regulation.

To pass on to the Romans. Tully informs us that their predecessors counted all Stage Plays unrespectable and scandalous. Insomuch that any Roman who turned actor was not only to be degraded, but likewise as it were disincorporated and unnaturalized by the order of the Censors.

St. Augustine, in the same book, commends the Romans for refusing the *Jus Civitatis* to Players, for seizing their Freedoms, and making them perfectly foreign to their Government.

In the Theodosian Code, Players are called *Persona intronesta*, that is to translate it softly, persons maimed and blemished in their reputation. Their Pictures might be seen at the Play-House, but were not permitted to hang in any respectable place of the Town. Upon this text Gothofred tells us the function of Players was counted scandalous by the civil Law. And that those who came upon the Stage to divert the people, had a mark of infamy set upon them. *Famosi sunt ex edicto.*

I shall now come to our own Constitution. And I find by 39 Eliz. cap. 4, 1, Jac. cap. 7, That all Bearwards,\* common Players of Interlude, Counterfeit Egyptians, &c., shall be taken, adjudged Rogues, Vagabonds and sturdy beggars, and shall sustain all pain and punishment, as in this Act is in that behalf appointed. The penalties are infamous to the last degree, and capital too, unless they give over. 'Tis true, the first Act excepts those Players which belong to a Baron or

\* Persons who kept bear gardens or places of indecent entertainment.



other Personage of higher degree, and are authorized to Play under the hand and seal of such Baron or Personage. But by the later Statute, this privilege of Licensing is taken away. And all of them are expressly brought under the penalty without distinction.

About the year 1580, there was a Petition made to Queen Elizabeth, for suppressing of Play-Houses. 'Tis somewhat remarkable, and therefore I shall transcribe some part of the relation.

Many goodly Citizens, and other well disposed Gentlemen of London, considering that Play-Houses and Dicing-Houses were Traps for young Gentlemen and others, and perceiving the many inconveniences and great damage that would ensue upon the long suffering of the same, not only to particular persons but to the whole City; and that it would also be a great disparagement to the Governours, and a dishonour to the Government of this honourable city, if they should any longer continue, acquainted some pious Magistrates therewith, desiring them to take some course for the suppression of common Play-Houses, within the city of London and Liberties thereof; who thereupon made humble suit to Queen Elizabeth and her Privy Council, and obtained leave of her Majesty to thrust the Players out of the City, and to put down all Play-Houses and Dicing-Houses within their Liberties, which accordingly was effected. And the *Play-Houses* in Grace-Church street, &c., were quite put down and suppressed.

I shall give a modern instance or two from France, and so conclude these authorities.

In the year 1696, we are informed by a Dutch Print, (M. L'Archevique appugi, &c.) That the Lord Arch-Bishop, 'supported by the interest of some religious persons at Court, has done his utmost to suppress the *Public Theatres* by degrees; or at least to clear them of Profaneness.'

And last summer the Gazettes in the Paris Article affirm:—That the King has "ordered the Italian Players to retire out of France, because they did not observe his Majesties Orders, but represented immodest pieces, and did not correct their obscenities and indecent gestures."

The same Intelligence the next week after, acquaints us, that 'some persons of the first quality at Court, who were the Protectors of these Comedians, had solicited the French King to re-call his order against them, but their request had no success.'

And here to put an end to the modern authorities, I shall subjoin a sort of Pastoral Letter published about two years since by the Bishop of Arras, in Flanders. The Reader shall have as much of it as concerns him in both Languages.

*An Order of the most Illustrious and most Reverend Lord Bishop of Arras against Plays.*

Guy De Seve De Roche Chonart, by the grace of God, &c., Bishop of Arras: To all the Faithful in the Town of Arras, Health and Benediction. A man must be very ignorant of his Religion, not to know the great disgust it has always declared for Publick Sightings, and for Plays in particular. The Holy Fathers condemn them in their writings; they look upon them as reliques of Heathenism and schools of Debauchery. They have been always abominated by the Church; and notwithstanding those who are concerned in this scandalous Profession are not absolutely

expelled by a formal Excommunication, yet she publicly refuses them the Sacraments, and omits nothing upon all occasions, to show her aversion for this employment, and to transuse the same sentiments into her children. The Rituals of the best governed Dioceses have ranged the Players among those whom the Parish Priests are obliged to treat as Excommunicated Persons.

Unless, therefore, we have a mind to condemn the Church, the Holy Fathers, and the most holy Bishops, 'tis impossible to justify Plays; neither is the defence of those less impracticable, who by their Countenance of these Diversions, not only have their share of the mischief done there, but contribute at the same time to fix these unhappy ministers of Satan in a Profession, which by depriving them of the sacraments of the Church, leaves them under a constant necessity of sinning, and out of all hopes of being saved, unless they give it over.

#### DIVISION 3RD.

I shall now, in the Third place, give a short account of the sense of the Primitive Church concerning the Stage. And first, I shall instance in her Councils.

The Council of Illiberis, or Collioure in Spain, decrees, 'That it shall not be lawful for any woman who is either in full communion or a probationer for Baptism, to marry, or entertain any Comedians or Actors; whoever takes this liberty shall be excommunicated.'

The first Council of Arles runs thus: 'Concerning Players, we have thought fit to excommunicate them as long as they continue to act.'

The second Council of Arles made their 20th Canon to the same purpose, and almost in the same words.

The Third Council of Carthage, of which St. Augustine was a member, ordains, 'That the Sons of Bishops, or other Clergymen, should not be permitted to furnish out Public Shows, or plays, or be present at them: Such sort of Pagan Entertainments being forbidden all the Laity. It being always unlawful for all Christians to come amongst Blasphemers.'

The second council of Chaalon sets forth, That Clergymen ought to abstain from all over-engaging Entertainments in Music or Show—(oculorum, auriumque ellicebris.) And as for the smutty and licentious insolence of Players and Buffoons, let them not only decline the hearing it themselves, but likewise conclude the Laity obliged to the same conduct.

#### TESTIMONY OF THE FATHERS.

To begin with Theophilus, Bishop of Antioch, who lived in the second century. 'Tis not lawful (says he) for us to be present at the Prizes of your Gladiators, lest by this means we should be Accessaries to the murders there committed. Neither dare we presume upon the liberty of your other shows, lest our senses should be tintured, and disobliged with indecency and profaneness. God forbid that Christians, who are remarkable for Modesty and Reservedness; who are obliged to Discipline and trained up in Virtue; God forbid, I say, that we should dishonour our thoughts, much less our practice, with such wickedness as this.'

Tertullian, who lived at the latter end of this century, is copious upon this subject. I shall translate but some part of it. In his Apologetic he thus addresses the Heathens: 'We keep off from your Public Shows because we can't understand the warrant of their Original. There's superstition and Idolatry in the case. And we dislike the entertainment because we dislike the reason of its Institution. Besides, we have nothing to do with the Frensies of the Race-Ground, the Lewdness of the Play-House, or the Barbarities of the Bear-Garden. The Epicureans had the Liberty to state the Notion and determine the Object of Pleasure. Why can't we have the same Privilege? What offence is it then if we differ from you in the idea of satisfaction? If we won't understand to brighten our Humour, and live pleasantly, where's the harm? If any body has the worst of it, 'tis only ourselves.'

His Book *de Spectaculis* was wrote on purpose to dissuade the Christians from the publick Diversions of the Heathens, of which the Play-House was one. In his first chapter he gives them to understand, 'That the tenour of their Faith, the Reason of Principle, and the Order of Discipline, had bar'd them the Entertainments of the Town. And therefore he exhorts them to refresh their Memories, to run up to their Baptism, and recollect their first Engagements. For without care, Pleasure is a strange bewitching Thing. When it gets the Ascendant 'twill keep on Ignorance for an excuse of Liberty, make a man's Conscience wink, and suborn his Reason against himself.

'But as he goes on, some people's Faith is either too full of Scruples, or too barren of Sense. Nothing will serve to settle them but a plain text of Scripture. They hover in uncertainty because it is not said as expressly, thou shalt not go to the Play-House, as 'tis thou shalt not kill. But this looks more like Fencing than Argument. For we have the meaning of the prohibition, though not the sound, in the first Psalm—Blessed is the man that walks not in Counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful.'

The Censors, whose business it was to take care of regularity and manners, looked on these Play-Houses as no other than Batteries upon Virtue and Sobriety, and for this reason often pulled them down before they were well built. So that here we can argue from the Precedents of mere Nature, and plead the Heathens against themselves.

And granting the regards of Quality, the advantages of age, or Temper, may fortify some people; granting Modesty secured and the Diversion refined as it were by this means; yet a man must not expect to stand by perfectly unmoved and impregnable. No body can be pleased without Sensible Impressions; nor can such Perceptions be received without a train of Passions attending them. These Consequences will be sure to work back upon their Causes, solicit the Fancy, and heighten the original pleasure. But if a man pretends to be a Stoic at Plays, he falls under another imputation. For where there is no impression, there can be no pleasure. And then the Spectator is very much impertinent in going where he gets nothing for his Pains. And if this were all, I suppose Christians have something else to do than to ramble about to no purpose.

'Even those very Magistrates who abet the Stage, discountenance the Players. They stigmatize their Character, and cramp their Freedoms.

The whole Tribe of them is thrown out of all honour and privilege. They are neither suffered to be Lords nor Gentlemen. To come within the Senate, or harangue the people, or so much as to be Members of a Common Council. Now what Caprice and Inconsistency is this! To love what we punish, and lessen those whom we admire! To cry up the Mystery, and censure the Practice; for a man to be as it were eclipsed upon the score of Merit is certainly an odd sort of Justice! True. But the Inference is stronger another way. What a confession then is this of an Ill Business, when the very Excellency of it is not without Infamy.

‘Since, therefore, human Prudence has thought fit to degrade the Stage, notwithstanding the Divertingness of it: Since Pleasure can’t make them an interest here, nor shelter them from Censure, How will they be able to stand the shock of Divine Justice, and what Reckoning have they Reason to expect Hereafter?

‘Will you not then avoid this seat of Infection? The very Air suffers by their Impurities; and they almost pronounce the Plague. What though the performance may be in some measure pretty and entertaining? What though Innocence, yes, and Virtue, too, shines through some part of it? ’Tis not the custom to prepare poison unpalatable, nor make up Ratsbane with Rhubarb and Sena. No. To have the mischief speed, they must oblige the Sense, and make the Dose pleasant. Thus the Devil throws in a Cordial Drop to make the draught go down, and steals some few Ingredients from the Dispensatory of Heaven.’

Clemens Alexandrinus affirms, ‘That the Circus and Theatre may not improperly be called the Chair of Pestilence. Away then with these Lewd, Ungodly Diversions, and which are but Impertinence at the Best. What part of Impudence, either in words or practice, is omitted by the Stage? Don’t the Buffoons take almost all manner of Liberties, and plunge through Thick and Thin, to make a jest? Now those who are affected with a vicious satisfaction will be haunted with the Idea, and spread the Infection. But if a man is not entertained, to what purpose should he go thither? Why should he be found where he finds nothing, and court that which sleeps upon the sense? If ’tis said these Diversions are taken only to unbend the mind, and refresh Nature a little. To this I answer. That the spaces between Business should not be filled up with such Rubbish. A wise man has a Guard upon his Recreations, and always prefers the Profitable to the Pleasant.’

St. Cyprian, or the Author *de Spectaculis*, will furnish us farther.

Here this Father argues against those who thought the Play House no unlawful Diversion, because ’twas not condemned by express Scripture. ‘Let Mere Modesty (says he) supply the Holy Text; and let Nature govern where Revelation does not reach. Some things are too black to lie upon Paper, and are more strongly forbidden because unmentioned. The Divine Wisdom must have had a low opinion of Christians had it descended to particulars in this case. Silence is sometimes the best method for Authority.’

And after having described the infamous Diversions of the Play House, he expostulates in this manner:—‘What business has a Christian at such Places as these? A Christian who has not the Liberty so much as to think of an ill thing. A Christian has much better sights



than these to look at. He has solid Satisfaction in his Power which will please and improve him at the same time."

ST. CHRYSOSTON.

'Most people fancy the Unlawfulness of going to Plays is not clear. But by their favour, a world of Disorders are the Consequences of such a Liberty.

'Let us not only avoid downright Sinning, but the Tendencies to it. Some indifferent Things are fatal in the Consequence, and strike us at the rebound. Now who would choose his standing within an Inch of a Fall, or swim upon the Verge of a Whirlpool? He that walks upon a Precipice, shakes though he does not tumble; and commonly his Concern brings him to the Bottom. The Case is much the same in reference to Conscience and Morality. He that won't keep his Distance from the Gulph, is oftentimes sucked in by the Eddy, and the least oversight is enough to undo him.'

He says what is most to be lamented, you are not at all uneasy at such Licentiousness. You Laugh when you should Frown, and Commend what you ought to Abhor. Hark you, you can keep the Language of your own House in order. If your Servant's or your Children's Tongues run Riot, they presently smart for it. And yet at the Play House you are quite another thing. These little Buffoons have a strange Ascendant! A luscious sentence is hugely welcome from their mouth; and instead of Censure, they have thanks and encouragement for their Pains. Now if a man would be so just as to wonder at himself, here is Madness and Contradiction in Abundance.

'But I know you'll say, what is this to me, I neither sing nor pronounce any of this lewd stuff? Granting your plea, what do you get by it? If you don't repeat these Scurrilities, you are very willing to hear them. Now whether the Ear, or the Tongue is mismanaged, comes much to the same reckoning. The difference of the *Organ* does not alter the Action so mightily as you may imagine. But pray how do you prove you don't repeat them? They may be your Discourse, or the entertainments of your Closet, for ought we know to the contrary. This is certain, you hear them with pleasure in your Face, and make it your business to run after them; and to my mind, these are strong Arguments of your Approbation.

'You'll say, I can give you many Instances where the Play-House has done no harm. Don't mistake. Throwing away of Time, and ill example has a great deal of Harm in it; and thus far you are guilty at the best. For granting your own Virtue impenetrable and out of Reach, granting the Protection of your Temper has brought you off unhurt, are all People thus fortified? By no means. However, many a weak Brother has ventured after you, and miscarried upon your Precedent. And since you make others thus Faulty, how can you be *Innocent* yourself? All the people undone There, will lay their Ruin at your Door. The Company are all Accessary to the mischief of the Place. For were there no Audience, we should have no Acting; and therefore those who join in the Crime, will ne'er be parted in the Punishment. Granting your Modesty has secured you, which, by the way, I believe nothing of;



yet since many have been debauched by the Play-House, you must expect a severe Reckoning for giving them Encouragement. Though after all as Virtuous as you are, I doubt not, you would have been much Better had you kept away.

‘In fine, let us not dispute to no purpose; the practice won’t bear Defence. Where the cause is naught, ’tis in vain to rack our Reason, and strain for Pretences. The best excuse for what is past, is to stand clear from the danger and do so no more.’

One citation more from St. Chrysostom, and I take leave. In the Preface of his Commentary upon St. John’s Gospel speaking of Plays and other Public Shows, he has these words:—

‘But what need I branch out the lewdness of those Spectacles, and be particular in Description? For what’s there to be met with but lewd Laughing, but Smut, Railing, and Buffoonry? In a word, ’Tis all Scandal and Confusion. Observe me, I speak to you all, Let none who partake of this Holy Table unqualify himself with such Mortal Diversions.” Again, “What harm say you is there in going to a play? Is that sufficient to keep one from the Communion? I ask, can there be a more shameless sin than to come to the holy table defiled with adultery? Hear the words of him who is to be our Judge. Jesus Christ saith, “Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.” What can be said of those who spend whole days in these places in looking on women of ill fame? With what face will they pretend to say, they did not behold them to lust after them? They see women adorned on purpose to inspire lust, and if in the Church itself, where Psalms are sung, the Scriptures read, and the face of the Almighty appears, lust will creep in like a thief, how shall they overcome the motions of concupiscence who frequent the Stage?”

#### TESTIMONIES AGAINST THE STAGE AS IT HAS BEEN CONDUCTED IN MORE MODERN TIMES.

Whoever has carefully read the foregoing description and condemnations of the ancient stage, and the pleas put in for it by some Christians of these days, and know any thing by personal observation, reading or hearing of modern plays and their advocates among the professors of religion, must be forcibly struck with the resemblance between them all. That connection will be increased by a few passages from later writers and the censure of more modern branches of the Church of Christ.

As to the latter suffice it to say, that all the Protestant Churches of Europe have, in one form or other, condemned it, or enacted regulations against it, as existing since the Reformation. The Churches of France, Holland and Scotland have declared it to be unlawful to go to comedies, tragedies, interludes, farces, or other stage plays, acted in public or private; because in all ages these have been forbidden among Christians, as bringing in a corruption of good manners.”

Let us hear the testimony of a few eminent individuals. Chief Justice Hale thus speaks:—

“Gaming and plays, as they are pernicious, and corrupt youth, so if they had no other fault, they are justly to be declined in respect to their

excessive expence of time, and habituating men to idleness and vain thoughts, and disturbing passions when they are past as well as when they are used."

MR. WILBERFORCE.

"There has been much argument concerning the lawfulness of theatrical amusements. Let it be sufficient to remark, that the controversy would be short indeed, if the question were to be tried by the criterion of *love to the Supreme Being*. If there were any thing of that sensibility for the honor of God, and of that zeal in his service, which we show in behalf of our earthly friends, or of our political connections, we should not seek our pleasures in that place, which the debauchee inflamed with wine, or bent on the gratification of other licentious appetites, finds most congenial to his state and temper of mind. In that place, from the neighborhood of which decorum, and modesty, and regularity retire, while riot and lewdness are invited to the spot, and invariably select it for their chosen residence; where the sacred name of God is often profaned; where sentiments are often heard with delight, and motions and gestures often applauded, which would not be tolerated in private company."

To this let me add the testimony of Sir John Hawkins, who, as one says, was never considered over rigid or illiberal:—"Although it is said of plays that they teach morality, and of the stage, that it is the mirror of life; these assertions are mere declamations, and have no foundation either in truth or experience. On the contrary, a play-house and the region about it are the very hotbeds of vice."

I might add the testimonies of many professed unbelievers to the above. Let it suffice to say, that Lord Kaimes denounces the Theatre as most poisonous to the youth of England, and that even *Rosseau* opposed the establishment of a Theatre at Geneva, speaking of it thus: "It is impossible that an establishment so contrary to our ancient manners can be generally applauded. Where (he asks) would be the imprudent mother who would dare to carry her daughter to this dangerous school; and how many respectable women would think they dishonoured themselves in going there?"

I conclude these European testimonies, by referring to one of the best treatises against the stage that has ever appeared. I allude to the one written by Mrs. Hannah More, who has sometimes been quoted as a friend to the stage, because in early life she wrote two plays, which were acted with much applause, an applause excited by the loud huzzas of Johnson, Boswell and others. But let it be remembered, it was at that very time that she awakened to the evil of the stage, absented herself from her own applauded performances, and perhaps was meditating that admirable argument against the theatre, by which she hoped to counteract any evil of her own previous example. Let it be remembered also, that it was that same inconsistent Dr. Johnson who said concerning Bishop Collier's book against the Stage, from which I have taken the preceding extracts, that such was its effect, "that the wise and pious caught the alarm; and the nation wondered why it had suffered irreligion and licentiousness to be openly taught at the public charge."

## AMERICAN PROTESTS.

As to American protests against the Theatre and other corrupting amusements, one would think that the following, to which I have already alluded, from our own American Congress, ought to suffice. On the 12th of October, 1778, the following preamble and resolution were adopted :

"Whereas true religion and good morals are the only solid foundation of public liberty and happiness :

"*Resolved*, That it be and is hereby earnestly recommended to the several States to take the most effectual measures for the encouragement thereof, and for the suppressing of theatrical entertainments, horse racing, gaming, and such other diversions as are productive of idleness, dissipation, and a general depravity of manners."

Eighteen members voted against it. Amongst those in its favor, we are happy to see the names of such men as Samuel Adams and Gerry, of Massachusetts; Sherman and Ellsworth, of Connecticut; Robert Morris and Roberdean, of Pennsylvania; Richard Henry Lee and Marsden Smith, of Virginia; Laurens and Matthews, of South Carolina.

As to the protests of different denominations of Christians in our land, and the discipline exercised by them in relation to the same, I need not speak. The earliest protest against the Theatre in anything like an argument, was one set forth by the clergy of all denominations in Philadelphia, and written, I believe, either by Bishop White or Dr. Green. In the writings of Dr. Witherspoon and Dr. Dwight, Presidents of Princeton and Yale Colleges, we have some forcible and just appeals to the piety of Christians and the purity of the female sex to discountenance this evil entertainment.

The burning of the Richmond Theatre called forth throughout our land the most powerful arguments and pathetic addresses on the subject, while the erection of the Monumental Church on the ruins of the same, and the choice of Bishop Moore as its pastor, excited the proud hope that another would never rear its head in Richmond, or, if so, would never be encouraged by a communicant of the Episcopal Church.

SOME NOTICES OF DANCING AS A RELIGIOUS EXERCISE, AS WELL AS  
WORLDLY AMUSEMENT.

Although both the resolution and canon referred to in the foregoing pages, specify public balls as the object of their condemnation, because in them dancing is more apt to be seen in its most objectionable form, and with its greatest concomitant evils, of dress, expense, excess, evil communications, etc., yet, as the exercise of it elsewhere but prepares for, and tempts to it here, and it is liable to some of the same objections in any place where it is practiced, a few remarks as to its origin, history, and usual effects, are subjoined, and more especially because the Scriptures are often appealed to for authority.

Considered as a mere movement of the limbs, unstudied and untaught, it is the natural and innocent expression of the light and joyous feelings of children in their pastimes, and in which the voice will be apt to take some part. Older persons also of a peculiar temperament, when under some high pleasurable excitement, whether from wine, strong drink, or other stimulus, are apt thus to leap and sing. Deranged persons too, if of a happy instead of melancholy turn, are sometimes disposed to this use of the limbs and voice. Wherefore we find Cicero, when condemning the exercise as unbecoming a Roman citizen, says, "Scarcely any sober person dances, unless he is deranged, either in solitude or at a modest supper." (*Nemo fere saltat sobrius, nisi insanit, neque in solitudine, neque in convivio honesto.*) He says it was done at the conclusion of unseasonable feasts, in merry places, with many luxuries. The question whether it was wrong in itself was, it seems, as difficult then as now, since it was never practised by itself. The history of dancing, however, apart from this tendency of our nature to its simple, unstudied exercise, when highly excited, is peculiar, and deserves consideration. We read of it at an early period in the history of all nations, in connection with certain religious celebrations, in which thanksgivings were offered up for some great deliverances or favors. Thus, immediately after the passage through the Red sea, we find Moses and the Israelites singing a noble song of praise to Jehovah, while Miriam and her women responded, she with a timbrel in her hand, and both she and they using some becoming and sympathetic motions of body called dances, but doubtless very different from those now used. There is no reason for supposing that this was the first time such a mode of thanksgiving was adopted, but much for believing that it had a previous existence among the Jews and other nations. Soon after this we find the fickle and impatient Jews, at the very foot of Mount Sinai, dancing around the golden calf which they had made to be their god. They sacrificed to him, then sat down to eat and to drink of the sacrifice, and rose up to play or dance. Again, when David brought the ark up to the city, he laid aside his royal robes, put on a linen ephod, and was seen "leaping and dancing before the Lord with all his might;" insomuch that Michael, his wife, despised him in her heart, for thus uncovering himself and making



himself as one of the foolish young men. Out of this circumstance in David's life there grew up a custom in Israel for a number of persons to meet together once a year, and by the stimulus of the whole choir, and all the instruments of music in the temple, to dance and clap their hands with joy. We read the same also in Church history of certain Christians in the east, who celebrated the resurrection of Christ at Easter by singing, dancing and clapping their hands in the temples. In our country to this day there are some small societies who thus worship. Such persons have not only justified themselves by the examples of David, Miriam and others, but by certain passages in the Psalms which speak of praising God "in the dance," or "with dances." Learned men, however, have thought that those passages do not refer to the motions of the limbs, in such dances, but rather to the instruments of music, and the playing on them in public worship, though certain motions of the arms and head may have accompanied them. Similar exercises were used in pagan worship. As paganism in all its forms was only a corruption of the true Patriarchal religion, so many modes of its worship were borrowed from God's ancient people, and most probably this. Athenæus tells us that at the first, when they believed that the gods were their invisible guests, their dancing after sacrificial feasts was modest and their eating and drinking temperate. Afterwards, both himself and Plato say, that they degenerated into occasions of impurity and excess. Do we not see something of this very tendency in the sad account given by St. Paul of the abuse of the Lord's supper, even among the first Christians, which made it necessary to have it placed under the strongest safeguards. Nothing can be more clear from all history than that dancing, both before and for sometime after its corruption, formed a large part of the heathen worship, and that as unworthy views of their deities became prevalent, so their worship became more corrupt. Nor was it to be expected that this use of the body would always be employed only in the service of God. From praising the deity or deities, men began to praise heroes and heroines in song and dance, and to gratify all their own tastes, passions and lusts in the same. From the sacrificial feasts, music and dancing found their way to other entertainments, though something of their religious character may have gone with them, for the heathen had household gods whom they sought to propitiate. Cicero, Atticus and others inform us, that the more sober-minded, instead of the music and dancing at their feasts, performed by a band of persons hired for the purpose, would have some one to read choice passages from their best books to those who were at supper. Amongst the Egyptians, a skeleton was introduced to remind the guests of their mortality, and admonish them to be temperate. Among the Romans and Grecians who adopted the custom, this was soon perverted. Instead of its being a "memento mori," the Romans made the master of the feast to point to it, saying, "Vivamus, dum licet esse, bene," (let us live while we live); while the Grecians made him say words to this effect: "Drink and be merry, for thus shalt thou be after death." No one, after reading these words, can be at a loss for St. Paul's allusion when he says, though in condemnation, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." Thus does man pervert the best institutions, whether human or divine. Let me illustrate this by another instance. We read that God divided the



land of Israel among the tribes and families by *lot*, and directed its use for other purposes, saying, "The lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord." Believing in this assurance, it has been used on certain occasions among Jews and Christians, ever since, even to the choice of an Apostle to supply the place of Judas. The Pagans soon had their god, to whom they appealed in like manner. "*Sed te nos facimus fortuna Deam, cœloque locamus.*" The Philosophers laughed at both Jews and Gentiles, and called it chance. All men know how soon this religious institution was perverted. Augustus introduced into his feasts a game called the *Lottery*, which is substantially the same with our lotteries at this day. And what are all the games of chance which have been and are to this day, but perversions of God's ordinance? What mischief have they not done? What vice and misery have they not spread over the world,—baffling all the efforts of Churches and civil rulers to suppress them? Christians have always objected to them, because there was either pagan idolatry or philosophical atheism in them,—either an appeal to an imaginary deity, *fortune*, or else to the atheist's god, *chance*. Thus has it been with this once religious exercise of dancing. So entirely has it been applied to other and different purposes, that the Church of God, by her laws and ministers, has at different times been obliged to denounce it, as displeasing to God, because used in the service of the world, the flesh and the devil, though she has very properly used some explanatory word, as *wanton* or *immodest*, that she might not even seem to cast reproach on what the pious have practised, as we read in Scripture.

In pursuing the history of this amusement, we find that it was not used among the ancients as an exercise for promoting health (a plea sometimes put in for it), since far more manly and suitable sports were adopted for this end, but was cultivated as an art by certain persons, in connection with music, for purposes of gain. It was seen with more or less that was objectionable at private or public entertainments.\* Others,

\* To such music and dancing our Lord most probably refers in the parable of the prodigal son. Approbation, however, of such, cannot fairly be inferred. It is only a comparison instituted between the joy of an earthly father, at the reformation and return of a son, exhibited by a part of the good things of this world, and that of angels at the conversion of a sinner to God. If we press the analogy further than this, we shall feel called upon to celebrate the conversion of a sinner to God at this day by feasting and mirth, which all would condemn. Our Lord and all the inspired writers were in the habit of representing heavenly by earthly things, even by some confessedly sinful. Thus, in the very next chapter, our attention to the future welfare of the soul is urged by the parable of the unjust steward, whose wise forethought is commended to our imitation, but surely not his unjust manner of showing it. St. Paul, in several places, refers to the races and bloody combats of the ancient amphitheatres, when he exhorts Christians to "be temperate in all things," "to press towards the prize," "to strive as in an agony," "to resist even unto blood:" following the example of those who, after much previous training, put forth all their strength in the combat, were often covered with blood, and sometimes died in the strife, amidst the shouts of the spectators. He even compares all that host of holy men mentioned in his epistle to the Hebrews, "of whom the world was not worthy, and who died in the faith," to those thousands, and sometimes hundreds of thousands, of idle, dissolute and blood-thirsty persons, who hung like clouds in the air on the seats around and above the combatants, and bids Christians be animated by the invisible presence of these faithful departed ones, in running their race and fighting their fight, as these others were by those who encouraged them to the contest. And yet, horrid as were these amusements, the Apostle in using them as comparisons does not stop to condemn them. If, indeed, we had heard of our Lord or any of the Apostles frequenting such places for amusement, then their silence might fairly be considered as approbation, and we might follow their example as to similar things of the present day. Our Lord did once honor

with a view to pleasure and admiration, imitated the exquisite skill of these performers. Thus we find Herodias so delighting Herod, whose family had introduced all Roman and Grecian amusements into Judea, as to lead to the tragic death of John the Baptist. At the time of the introduction of Christianity into the world, dancing by practiced performers made a part of all the public shows and theatrical exhibitions of Greece and Rome, as well as of many private entertainments. Together with all its companions, it was denounced as being a part of that "lust of the flesh, lust of the eye, and pride of life," which the Scriptures declare to be not of God, but of the world, and the Church reckoned to be among those pomps and vanities renounced at baptism. We do not find that there was any recognition of it as practiced in any form, so as to be encouraged among Christians; but as the sober-minded of the Romans considered it unbecoming a citizen to dance, as public performers were deprived of certain privileges of citizenship, so the Fathers speak of it as unbecoming Christians, from their childhood up, taught and practised as it was at that day. Wherefore we find St. Ambrose saying of such things, "*Let mothers teach their children prayers, not dances.*" As to the places where it was practiced, he says, "*Where the timbrels sound, the pipe makes a noise, the harp clatters, the cymbals shake together, what fear of the Lord can there be.*" St. Chrysostom says of the act itself, "*God hath not given us legs to dance, but to walk modestly.*" "*Where wanton dancing is, there the devil is present.*" St. Basil says, "*Instead of stirring up thy feet, and jumping furiously, thou oughtest to bend thy knees in prayer.*" These expressions shew, that the same pleas were put in for the amusement at that day which are now used, and that the same answers were made. The exciting and engrossing entertainment still continued, however, to be indulged by some, and as the days of thick darkness and deep depravity came on, was more and more the

with his presence a marriage in Galilee, as his ministers have done ever since, when called on to legalize and bless the nuptials, and we have reason to believe that music and dancing, more or less unbecoming, was oftentimes, then as now, introduced, though the mode of it may have differed much. But as in far the greater number of marriages at this day they are not admitted, being objected to by the more pious and sober minded, so it doubtless was then, since we find even some of the Pagans banishing them from their feasts and substituting more sober enjoyments. Even some ministers of religion, it must be acknowledged, have, in every age, preferred the more festive and merry weddings, while the graver and more devoted ones have discouraged them and soon left the places where they were introduced, as the primitive canons enjoined it on all Christians to do. Whether our Lord preferred the more sober or the others, whether, if now on earth, he would unite in practice with those few of his ministers who encourage such things by their presence, or with those many who disapprove, let the reader judge. There is a circumstance mentioned in connection with the marriage in Galilee which merits a passing notice, as it has perplexed and distressed some pious persons to whom it seems to represent our Lord as encouraging not only merry making, but drunkenness. The wine being consumed more was wanted, and our Lord, by a miracle, furnished some of the best kind. The master of the feast institutes a comparison between our Lord and others, as to the supply of wine, his being the best, their's of a meaner sort. There is not the slightest intimation of any thing like intemperance at that feast, that our Lord should, by a miracle, have increased it, and thereby given a perpetual sanction to intemperance, while scripture declares that drunkards should never enter heaven, is utterly incredible. The fact which is stated of its being the best wine is worthy of notice. It is well established, that the purest and best wine in ancient times was the least intoxicating. He who did all things well, doubtless furnished the guests with that least liable to be abused to intemperance, while it was still most healthful and pleasant. We only add, that if figures, parables and allusions, justify all those things from whence they are drawn, and to which they refer, then may almost any evil custom or act be sanctioned, not only by Scripture, but by every sermon that is preached or book that is written.

delight of those who knew not what the happiness of true religion is. It surely ought to be a source of jealousy and apprehension with the Christian as to this amusement, that not content with appropriating to itself a portion of the time allotted to worldly pursuits, it made such large inroads upon that blessed day which God has commanded us to keep holy, and this too without the least pretence of restoring the exercise to its original use; for if that were attempted, the amusement would soon be abandoned by those most devoted to it. If religion were now seen mingling with the dance, as has been said, the ball room would soon be deserted. For many centuries, with some kindred diversions, it has possessed itself of a portion of the Sabbath through a large part of Christendom, that is, wherever the Romish Church prevails, which thus not only robs us of one-half of a sacrament, but gives up one-half of the Lord's-day to the world. With great difficulty was it dispossessed in our mother Church and land, and it is believed that it still holds some possession in parts of Protestant Europe where Romish influence and example are great. The increase of Romanism in our land, especially in the west, by the immense European emigration going on, is not likely to preserve our Sabbaths from some share of this desecration. From being delighted with the amusement during the evenings of the week, even until the hour that ushers in the Sabbath morning, the lovers thereof, even some born of Protestant parents, may become reconciled thus to close the Sabbath, and so neither the out-goings of its morning or evening may be made to praise him who has commanded us to keep that day holy. That such a reconciling of ourselves to that, of which at the first there is a shuddering horror, which makes one exclaim, "Am I a dog, that I should do this thing," is not impossible, I mention the following circumstance:—A few years since, when traveling in a public stage through one of our western States, I heard a young lady, who was returning from a Romish school to spend her vacation at home, give an account of the Sabbath exercises there. A part of the day was spent in dancing, which at first so distressed her, being brought up a Protestant, that she hung her head out of the window, and would not look at it. After a time, however, she learned to witness it without emotion, and then with pleasure, and then to take part in it, and at length to delight in it. She also entreated the person to whom she was speaking not to let her mother, who was a pious woman, hear of it, as she feared it might prevent her being allowed to go back to the delightful place.

Such being the history of this exercise, the question is, as to its continuance, whether as a religious act, or as an amusement? Since it was never enjoined as a part either of Jewish or Christian worship, we are under no obligation to restore it, and can have no sufficient inducement to do it, seeing that it could only suit, even in its best form, a very early and simple state of society. As an amusement, seeing that it is a perversion of an ancient religious exercise, and has ever been discouraged by the sober-minded and pious of all nations on account of its evil tendencies and accompaniments, we ought conscientiously to enquire, whether its great liability to abuse, and its many acknowledged abuses, should not make us frown upon it in all its forms? I will briefly allude to some of the objections to it.

1st. When taught to the young at an early age, it is attended with an

expense of time and money which might be far better employed; it promotes the love of dress and pleasure, to which the young are already too prone; it tempts to vanity and the love of display; it induces a strong desire to enter on the amusements of the world at an early period, in order to exhibit the accomplishments thus acquired, and to enjoy the pleasures for which a taste has been formed; it promotes forwardness instead of modesty; it leads the young ones exactly in the opposite direction to that pointed out by the word of God and pledged in the baptismal vows. Thus educated, they are, in this respect at least, trained not in the way they ought to go, but in the way they should forsake, according to almost universal consent, if by divine grace they are ever turned to God in true penitence and faith.

2dly. In relation to those more advanced in years, it is liable to all the above objections in a still higher degree, beside some others. It is acknowledged to be, by the help of exciting music and the mingling together of both sexes, and quick action of the limbs, the most exhilarating, fascinating, and absorbing of all exercises; quite different from any of those to which it has been compared, and by which it is sought to be justified, so that it is almost always indulged to excess; extended to a late hour of the night; followed by exhaustion of mind and body, and sometimes sickness. Instead of being sober-minded, as young men are exhorted to be by the Apostle, those engaged in this exercise are more or less beside themselves through high excitement, uttering idle words in great abundance, and being high minded and mannered. Great is the temptation not only to expensive dressing, but to improper dressing and exposure of the person, to the display of vanity, the seeking after admiration for qualities having no real worth in them. Those who think they excel in a more private way are tempted to exhibit themselves in some more public one. Those who see it performed with great skill in private are tempted to see it performed more admirably in the theatre, and this will reconcile them to the more immodest performances in private, which at first were offensive to the feelings.

Is this a proper entertainment or practice for the Christian? It has always been considered so disreputable to excel in this as a public performer, that such an one has been excluded, sometimes from civil, and always from religious privileges, and from respectable society. Can the practice of it then, even in a more private way, be suitable and becoming to a serious Christian? Very few persons can be found who do not answer, No. How many there are who say that the ministers of the gospel need not, should not, preach against it, but only seek to insinuate religion into the heart, for if that be changed, this, and all such things, are forsaken as insipid and uncongenial. Young converts feel this to be so, and are distressed at the suggestion that they may one day be drawn back to the love of these things; but when their love grows cold, when they cease to watch and pray against temptation, but go into it, then old tastes and desires return, and if they yield, then are they brought into still closer intimacy with the lovers of pleasure, and if they do not relinquish their profession, continue it only to be a burden to themselves, a matter of grief to some and of railery to others. If such persons could only know what is thought, and often said of them, by many of the votaries of pleasure who wonder at their inconsistency, it surely would not be



without its effect upon their conduct in this matter. The men of this world are wise in their generation and good judges of consistency. In such matters let their testimony be heard. Only one remark now, and I am done. Let any persons doubting or hesitating on this subject, just compare their feelings and views, when first converted to the Lord, if truly so, their preparation for renewing the baptismal vows, for kneeling the first time at the sacred chancel, and their exercises while there, with their preparation for the ball-room and their exercises of mind and body while there, and thus test the compatibility of the two; and if any should still say, as some have said, that they have been as pious in a ball-room or theatre as at the table of the Lord, let them seriously enquire whether the piety they have exercised in either place is such as will be accepted in the great day, or make them meet for the purer joys of that great temple above where the sons of God shall shout for joy, and every member of their glorified bodies be made to take some part in the heavenly worship?



## ERRATA.

Page 37, note,	<i>Baron,</i>	should be	<i>Jason,</i>
" 42, line 25,	<i>nine,</i>	"	<i>nine hundred,</i>
" 48, line 24,	<i>of,</i>	"	<i>for,</i>
" 51, line 3,	<i>forbidden,</i>	"	<i>commanded,</i>
" 60, line 13,	<i>1832,</i>	"	<i>1818,</i>
" 72, line 7,	<i>greatest,</i>	"	<i>greater,</i>
" 72, line 23,	<i>their gratification,</i>	"	<i>these gratifications,</i>
" 76, line 8,	<i>members,</i>	"	<i>numbers,</i>
" 81, line 33,	<i>Persona intronesta,</i>	"	<i>Personæ inhonestæ,</i>
" 87, line 37,	<i>connection,</i>	"	<i>impression,</i>
" 89, line 13,	<i>eighteen,</i>	"	<i>only seven,</i>
" 89, line 16,	<i>Roberdeau,</i>	"	<i>Roberdeau,</i>
" 89, line 30,	<i>proud,</i>	"	<i>fond,</i>
" 92, line 7,	<i>Deam,</i>	"	<i>Deum,</i>
" 92, note,	<i>part,</i>	"	<i>feast,</i>
" 95, line 24,	<i>high minded,</i>	"	<i>light minded,</i>
" 96, line 3,	<i>now,</i>	"	<i>more.</i>

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